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SEPTEMBER 1952

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R. KOEBNER

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ACTON ON HISTORY

LIONEL KOCHAN

1

WRITING some forty years ago, the late H. A. L. Fisher said of Lord Acton that 'though many men of his time were more famous, few left behind them a larger legacy of unsatisfied curiosity'. This curiosity does not only include Acton's private life. It extends also to any assessment of his role as a historian. His interests ranged so widely and so deeply, so far beyond what is usually taken to be the field of history proper that it would be difficult to say in what precise sense Acton was a historian. He often said of himself that he had no contemporaries, and though he meant that he missed the company of disciples or sympathizers, the statement can also yield a second meaning. Acton had no contemporaries in the sense that his interests and also perhaps his capacity, separated him off from those Victorian historians — Macaulay, Creighton, Freeman, Stubbs — who produced at the least substantial works of scholarship with which their names are indissolubly linked. Acton, by comparison, seems a lightweight and even a dilettante — so far as his actual production is concerned, though not, of course, his scholarship. It is customary in this context to say that the mountain of erudition gave birth to a mouse of achievement. There is undeniable truth in this assertion. But it is by no means the whole truth. The fact is that if Acton did not produce a sustained work of historical scholarship, he certainly did produce a set of stimulating, original and coherent definitions of how history was to be written, what it should concern itself with, and what aim the historian should set before himself.

To the unreflecting historian who unquestioningly carries over into his work the accepted values of his environment such questions will very likely not occur at all. A historian such as Gibbon or Macaulay may in fact achieve his greatest success precisely because he epitomizes the values and outlook of his environment. Acton, however, was not of this type. Before he felt able to put pen to paper

The following abbreviate titles of Acton's works have been used: L.A.C.: *Lord Acton and his Circle* (ed. Gasquet, 1906); F.A.P.: *Essays on Freedom and Power* (ed. Himmelfarb, 1948); H.O.F.: *History of Freedom and other Essays* (ed. Figgis and Lawrence, 1907); L.M.G.: *Letters to Mary Gladstone* (ed. Paul, 1904); S.C.: *Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton* (ed. Figgis and Lawrence, 1917); H.E.S.: *Historical Essays and Studies* (ed. Figgis and Lawrence, 1907); L.M.H.: *Lectures on Modern History* (ed. Figgis and Lawrence, 1906); L.F.R.: *Lectures on the French Revolution* (ed. Figgis and Lawrence, 1910).

he had first to resolve important doubts concerning the exact scope of his inquiry. He then had to determine the nature of the material. He had next to evolve a method capable of comprehending the material. He had finally to determine the aim of historical inquiry as such. Whether this process taken as a whole constitutes a philosophy of history is largely a matter of terminology. At times Acton made this claim. At other times he seemed disposed to deny it. Certain it is, in any event, that despite lacunae, obscurities and minor inconsistencies, his answers to the questions he set himself are logically interconnected so as to compose a self-contained whole.

Many of these wider considerations were probably foreign to the younger Acton — until, say, he reached his later thirties. In broad terms, the division between the early and the mature Acton centres around his attitude to the world. Was the world to be confronted with ideal claims or was the attitude to be one of basic acceptance? Acton trod the unusual path of being a conservative in youth and a revolutionary in later life. But in each phase he was *sui generis*.

It was as a disciple of Edmund Burke, and especially of the later Burke, that Acton's first views were formed. He described Burke's speeches of 1790-95 as 'the law and the prophets' (L.A.C. p. 60); and in one of his earliest letters to Gladstone he wrote that the political purpose of the *Home and Foreign Review* (of which Acton was at this time co-editor with the Catholic convert Richard Simpson) was 'to maintain that old Whig system of which Burke is the great exponent' (Add. MSS. 44093 British Museum, letter dated June 30th, 1682). What Acton appreciated in Burke was the emphasis on tradition and an acceptance of the *status quo*. This he compared most favourably with the endeavour to inaugurate a society based on ideal criteria. It was a conflict that rightly or wrongly he saw incorporated in the American Civil War. He attacked, for example, what he called the Northerners' 'abstract, ideal absolutism . . . Their democratic system', he continued, 'poisons everything it touches' (F.A.P. p. 246). The same outlook can be discerned in his early treatment of nationalism — which he saw as an inseparable concomitant of revolution; of the political role of the Catholic Church — which he saw as the barrier to revolution; and of Catholic persecution, which in an age of the union of Church and State preserved society from anarchy. 'Every heresy', he wrote, 'that arose in the Middle Ages involved revolutionary consequences . . . The Albigenses, who provoked the cruel legislation against heretics, and who were exterminated by fire and sword, were the Socialists of those days. They assailed the fundamental institutions of society . . . The principles of the Waldenses and the Lollards were likewise incompatible with European civilization' (H.O.F. p. 324).

To this acceptance of the *status quo* there was an equivalent con-

ception of history. It too would accept what it saw and narrated: 'superfluity of moral standards in history', runs one passage in an early notebook. 'We are no wiser when we know that one is good or bad, but what are the causes and effects of his life. It is the business of Him to judge who can carry his judgments into effect' (Add. MSS. 5751). Elsewhere, Acton censured Goldwin Smith for discussing 'the morality of men and actions far oftener than history . . . either requires or tolerates . . . Method not genius, or eloquence, or erudition, makes the historian' (H.O.F. pp. 324-5). By 'method', another early note seems to indicate, Acton understood 'the organic division and arrangement of history' such as could be made 'the criterion of an universal history' (Add. MSS. 5752). It could not be said that he had gone much beyond these very general reflections.

However, although this strain represents without a doubt the overwhelming emphasis in Acton's early views, it does not entirely obscure a second strain at variance with the first. Two souls lived in Acton's breast. At much the same time as he would censure one historian for departing from the duty of neutral narration, he would also censure another for remaining within those very limits. A useful example is that of Ranke, whose 'dignified isolation' Acton spoke of with disdain. It involved, he held, 'a certain poverty in the reflections, a certain inadequacy of generalization' (*The Chronicle*, July 20th, 1867). These remarks by themselves are not perhaps of great consequence. But they gain immeasurably in importance when they are set alongside a slightly earlier review of a Mr Knight's *Popular History of England*. This now forgotten work provoked a review that amplifies considerably the point made *vis-à-vis* Ranke. Mr Knight, wrote Acton, 'mistakes a generous suavity of temper for that many-sided sympathy which enables the historian to distribute equal justice and to recognize, in every party and every opinion, that element of reason which gives it power over honest minds . . . His fairness is the negative spirit of indifference, which treats all men alike with distant respect, not an intelligent justice, *suum cuique tribuens*' (*Home and Foreign Review*, January 1863).

The antitheses here established between 'a many-sided sympathy' and the distribution of 'equal justice', or between 'fairness' and 'an intelligent justice', are of the utmost importance for the later Acton. He saw no contradiction between first appreciation and then condemnation. Fairness, in the sense of saying in every case the best that might be said, became a reproach. It showed the inability to discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil.

2

So much for Acton in his twenties. In his maturity his thought became far more systematic. All the previous scattered insights be-

came welded into one. His mode of achieving this lay along a path of thesis and antithesis. 'When you perceive a truth, look out for the balancing truth . . .' (Add. MSS. 5684). How did this apply to history? Acton saw historical knowledge as dependent on two opposing angles of vision, each of which has to be allowed full play. 'One must see', he writes, 'the inside and the outside of things' (Add. MSS. 4983). Each angle of vision is incomplete without its contrary to balance it. Taken together, on the other hand, they constitute the complete synthesis. To designate the internal vision, seeing from the inside, Acton frequently used the German word *Romantik*. He saw the attitude exemplified in many of the German writers of the early nineteenth century — above all in Herder and Hegel, in a French thinker such as de Maistre and in an English thinker such as Burke. Their 'scientific kernel', he wrote, was 'historicism' and this he described as 'not a phase — but a step, not a hypothesis — but a discovery, not a movement — but an advance' (Add. MSS. 5478).

Wherein lay the substance of this advance? Broadly speaking, the essential value of 'romanticism' to Acton was formed of two basic attributes. In the first place, in contradistinction to the erroneous positivist who saw history as a collection of facts, the romantic saw history as 'a process' which is 'not learnt like grammar or geometry' (Add. MSS. 4905). Secondly, and equally important, came the romantic's attitude to this process. He approached it without any pre-suppositions at all but absorbed himself into the historical reality. He assumed completely and utterly the identity and outlook of the object of his study, whatever it might be. His ultimate endeavour was to proceed even further and eliminate any barrier between himself and his material. He puts 'imagination and constructiveness before analysis and criticism'. He teaches 'the appreciation of every standpoint' and 'sympathy even with that which repelled' (Add. MSS. 5437, 5675, 5457). The romantic, the historicist is, in short, the relativist *par excellence*. He knows no other world and no other values than those which the historical process presents to him.

How does the historian come to know the historical reality? He has, answers Acton, a certain faculty of sympathy. This notion is never clarified in detail but its general purport is clear enough. It bears a marked similarity to what Dilthey understood by *Nacherleben*. Dilthey is referred to by Acton as 'the ripest product of the philosophy of the Continent' (Add. MSS. 4993); and as Acton, in such a considered statement of his views as the Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge considered 'historical ways of thought' to be the strongest current of the nineteenth century, the 'ripeness' of Dilthey was evidently meant to convey that in him this movement reached its culmination. In any event, although a detailed comparison is im-

possible, Acton used 'sympathy' in much the same way as Dilthey used *Nacherleben*. Their terminology can be at times closely similar. Dilthey wrote, for example: 'The historian cannot renounce the attempt to understand history in terms of itself on the basis of the analysis of the various systems of activity' (quoted and trans. Hodges *Wilhelm Dilthey — An Introduction*, p. 147). Acton's version of this runs: 'It takes long to be really at home in many ages, to feel with them, to limit one's knowledge and adapt one's ideas to theirs' (Add. MSS. 5394). The historian, in fact, treats his material as an expression of the reality of mind which he has to re-animate in all its fulness.

The particular type of person in whom Acton saw embodied this capacity of sympathy was the artist. In this he was at one with Dilthey again, and also with Collingwood, with whom Acton here shares close points of contact. The artist whom from this point of view Acton held in particular respect was George Eliot. In a letter to Mary Gladstone he eulogized Eliot's superiority to 'the deepest historians'. 'George Eliot', he wrote, in a passage that merits a lengthy quotation, 'seemed to me capable not only of reading the diverse hearts of men, but of creeping into their skins, watching the world through their eyes, feeling their latent background of conviction, discerning theory and habit, influences of thought and knowledge, of life and of descent, and having obtained this experience, recovering her independence, stripping off her the borrowed shell, and exposing scientifically and indifferently the soul of a Vestal, a Crusader, an Anabaptist, an Inquisitor, a Dervish, a Nihilist, or a Cavalier without attraction, preference or caricature. And each of them should say that she displayed him in his strength, that she gave rational form to motives he had imperfectly analysed, that she laid bare features in his character he had never realized' (L.M.G. pp. 60-1).

The romantic historian-cum-artist, as depicted in this way, fulfilled an essential task in the construction of Acton's historical world. But, by itself, his contribution was incomplete and required its counter-balance in the viewpoint of the historian who looked from the outside. It was not for nothing that Acton quoted Goethe's dictum — the classical is healthy and the romantic sickly (Add. MSS. 5437). Why should this be so and at what precise point did the internal vision require to be forsaken in favour of the external? The answer to both questions springs from the very nature of romanticism itself. Were the historian's vision to be limited to the mere level of history, a certain aspect of human experience would be necessarily and inevitably neglected. The romantic historian, or novelist, such as Acton took George Eliot to be, explicitly or implicitly denies that there exists any world other than that expressed in and by the subject matter. The 'appreciation of every standpoint' is equivalent to

robbing the particular standpoint of its significance. It is, in fact, only possible on this basis. It is, for example, highly questionable whether Acton's analysis of George Eliot is justified. But assuming it were, her Cavalier and her Inquisitor, her Anabaptist and her Dervish would be, when juxtaposed, deprived of their claims to possess any absolute validity; for the romantic historian by definition cannot transgress the limits of history. He can only turn such claims into history; i.e. relativize them. He may certainly acknowledge the existence of the claims but he cannot differentiate between one and another. He is in this way falsifying history, for it belongs to the very essence of such claims that they possess an absolute content. The internal viewpoint of the romantic historian, however, is unable to grasp and depict this. His approach must necessarily entail the neglect of the non-historical world, independent of historical experience.

It is only the external vision that can do justice to the non-historical world. It is this alone than can discriminate between one viewpoint and another or, in other words, deliver a judgment. The name that Acton gave to the external vision, to the faculty that permitted of discrimination was 'morality'. It was this that 'sympathy' neglected. 'The modern theory of entering into every situation and every system, leads directly up to rehabilitation . . . It ends by excluding the moral standard' (Add. MSS. 5478).

Strictly speaking, the historian only knows morality at second hand. It is not for him to work it out in any way. He is required only to make use of it in the actual task of historical writing. How does he do this? In the same way as the concept of 'sympathy' requires the complete absorption of the subject in the object, the concept of 'morality' requires the complete withdrawal of the subject from the object, of the historian from the level of historical experience. Following on this major distinction came a series of others. If the internal viewpoint sees history as a 'process' without beginning and without end, the external viewpoint sees it positivistically as a succession of facts, each of which can be identified and evaluated. Furthermore, and most important of all, to the romantic's internal view the process of history is necessarily meaningless. It is a datum and that is all he may say. It might in detail be something entirely different and his attitude would remain unchanged. His viewpoint derives its validity from what exists by the mere token of existence. 'If there is no God', writes Acton, 'our ideas of good and evil come from experience — the criterion is in the result. Success in the long run determined the right' (Add. MSS. 5604). The moralist-historian, on the other hand, as distinct from the 'sympathetic' historian, although his position does not require him to condemn unreflectingly what exists, is none the less obliged to assume a

critical and questioning attitude. For him, God does exist as the incorporation of a certain code of morality and it is this that supplies the basis of the questioning. To the romantic, the real is rational. To the moralist it may or may not be so. His judgment will depend on what he finds. This is merely another way of saying that only when viewed externally through the spectacles of morality has history any meaning. Experience *per se* is meaningless.

3

What did Acton understand by 'morality'? He termed 'Ethics of Unbelief' the view that 'Christianity (was) chiefly for relations to God' (Add. MSS. 5604). This represented one extreme. At the other extreme stood paganism which took 'the whole of religious duty' to be centred in 'the qualities which relate to life with other men'. Acton himself sought a balance 'when obligations to man do not interrupt duties to God' (Add. MSS. 5020). However, if it be true that these are valid criteria, then Acton unquestionably inclined to the pagan extreme for, despite this analysis, his view of morality laid overwhelming emphasis on the obligations due from man to man. At this stage one example only need be cited — in Acton's scales, as he wrote to Bishop Creighton 'the high morality' of Penn outweighed the systems of Barrow, Baxter and Bossuet — although these latter were 'higher, spiritually, constructively, scientifically' (Add. MSS. 6871).

The heart and soul of Acton's conception of morality here manifests itself. He judged a man not by his theory but by his practice (Add. MSS. 5516); and the practice by which he judged was the respect accorded by a man to his fellow-men. It meant respect for their views — 'wisdom appears less in opinions than in the treatment of other men's' (Add. MSS. 5432). It meant also respect for their right to existence. *Above all*, it meant respect for their right to existence. It was always on the treatment of man by man that Acton fixed his gaze. It is only life that is 'absolutely essential' he wrote to Lady Blennerhassett: '... c'est la vie humaine qui est l'arche sainte. Personne ne peut être plus décidément caractérisé et condamné que celui qui verse le sang. Cela tranche toute question et contrebalance toute autre chose' (S.C. p. 281). Murder, wrote Acton in another context, is 'the scientific zero', the 'lowest point' by which men, parties and systems were to be judged. If this be tampered with, every other standard would lose its validity — and 'morality and history go asunder' (H.E.S. pp. 494-5). All this, as the centre-piece of the historian's external view, is summed up most pithily in a phrase from the letter to Creighton already quoted: 'The greatest crime is homicide.'

Acton drew his emphasis on man and on life from an inter-

dependent relationship between man and God. If Acton was tragically conscious of human weakness and corruptibility, he was just as much aware that this represented only one side of the picture. At its lowest he thought it 'easier to find people fit to govern themselves than people fit to govern others' (Add. MSS. 4941). At its highest he spoke of 'the divine image in the soul' and of men as the children of God. The synthesis at which he aimed was a respect for man based on an acknowledgement of God which, given his identification of God with morality, was tantamount to respect for the moral and divine element in man. He wrote to Mary Gladstone: 'The rights of man on earth are the consequence of the rights of God in Heaven'.

All this Acton maintained to be 'the common, even the vulgar code'. He never made the slightest claim to originality. Indeed he could not, for what his emphasis on the value of the individual human life owes to Christianity needs no mention — nor would he have wished it otherwise. There are none the less two related aspects of Acton's moral code that diverge greatly from the common and the vulgar. In the first place, he exempted private life from moral concern. 'Chastity not so applicable' runs one cryptic note (Add. MSS. 5478). The historian is elsewhere instructed — 'do not so much mind the sins of private life'. These latter, a third passage explains, belong only 'to the portrait' and not to history. As far as history is concerned the seven deadly sins do not exist. Acton continues: 'Que Louis XVIII ait été glouton, Pitt ivrogne, Washington colère, Burke peu délicat en affaires, Hamilton peu fidèle en mariage, Fox joueur, Schelling brutal, cela me touche bien peu' (S.C. p. 282).

The exclusion of private life from moral purview had its pendant in an extension of the same moral purview to the whole of public life. Acton, wittingly or not, reversed the usual order of importance. The converse of the historical irrelevance of private behaviour was the overwhelming historical relevance of public behaviour. When Acton spoke of his fear lest 'morality and history go asunder' he was expressing the conviction that public life or politics — the terms are used interchangeably — must be subjected to the moral claim. He demanded even more than this. In his later life Acton came to deplore any division between temporal and spiritual. He maintained the absolute identity of the claims that must be made on the world as an indivisible whole. 'Have you not discovered', he wrote jocularly to Mary Gladstone, 'have I never betrayed, what a narrow doctrinaire I am, under a thin disguise of levity? . . . Politics come nearer religion with me, a party is more like a church, error more like heresy, prejudice more like sin, than I find it to be with better men' (L.M.G. p. 199). And this is but one of many passages where Acton denied to public life any autonomous status. The corollary was of course its moral basis.

So far Acton's scheme of morality has been discussed virtually in a vacuum. This would in the best of circumstances be an inadequate procedure. In the present instance it is more than usually the case, for a morality that eschews theory to concentrate all the more on conduct suffers disproportionately when it is deprived of the contact with reality. Indeed, how it could apply at all to any reality might be even more obscure than that it could apply in the sphere of individual conduct. This gap can to some extent be bridged by touching, even if only sketchily, on two aspects of the supra-individual reality that were of particular interest to Acton — parliamentary democracy in Victorian England and Christianity. It is characteristic of his approach that both came under the same category of public life and that there is consequently some overlapping in his analysis. Even so, the extent of the latter is unimportant in comparison with the general elucidation which the consideration of it afforded.

As a political critic, Acton expressly based his position on the principle that 'all political authorities must be tested and reformed according to a code which was not made by man' (H.O.F. p. 5). How did Victorian politics, in the widest sense of the term, emerge from this test? To begin with, Acton had no doubt that party government was the 'most moral of all'. The reason that he gave was highly characteristic: 'teaches to treat the opponent to the same rights you claim yourself' (Add. MSS. 4870). But this did not at all mean that party government was moral when compared with an absolute morality of government. On the contrary, Acton attacked the party system in its inception, institutions and practice. In a manner that Berdyaev has made more familiar he spoke of the 'democratic immorality'. The basis for this attack was the fact of its being 'founded on the absence of any criterion of right and wrong' (Add. MSS. 5449). He then went on to trace the presence of this basic immorality through every articulation of the system. Acton noted of the Cabinet that its 'solidarity' and 'partnership' required a sort of polite hypocrisy and conspiracy: 'obliges men to defend in public what they condemn in private, and to make no secret of their real sentiments to their opponents. It is too well understood' (*ibid.*). Further, the Cabinet depended on the obtaining of a majority and this in its turn opened the way to additional corruption: 'some weak men will be attracted by what government has to give . . . Not mere money . . . Patronage' (Add. MSS. 4870). Acton, finally, summed up Parliamentary debates with a striking epigram: 'Hansard comes between Boccaccio and Brantôme' (Add. MSS. 5689).

Acton's criticism of Christianity forms the complement to his attack on politics; for the immorality of the latter is linked to the

failure of the former as a public influence. He deplored the fact that 'Christianity taught so little politics' (Add. MSS. 4944). Conversely, he also wrote that 'if the Church was to sanctify society, it must extend its influence over the state. That private life should be holy and public life unregenerate, that a citizen should put aside his religion as soon as he accepts political office was out of the question' (Add. MSS. 4980). In diverse ways, the root of this distinction was traced back to the political disinterestedness and even apathy of the early Church. 'The Roman Christians', he wrote, '... did not dream of controlling the state. They obeyed, or submitted without resistance. They looked up to power with excessive awe. They allowed it to legislate against Christianity, to make laws for religion, to control the Church ... so far from proposing new things, they abstained from public service' (Add. MSS. 4868). In another passage, discussing the same period in the history of the Church, Acton complained that the Christians 'turned away from the state. Their thoughts were in a Kingdom not of this world. Above all, no political party ... Could not convert the Empire. Not at all agreed as to social principles. Some defended slavery, some opposed it...' (Add. MSS. 5441). It was in this light that Acton interpreted the subsequent history of the Church. Thus he saw in the conversion of the Roman Empire under Constantine a largely nominal victory. What happened *in fact*, he stated (in the lecture 'The History of Freedom in Christianity') was that the Church became 'a gilded crutch of absolutism'.

Acton's conception of morality and all that it embraced might be further traced in relation to economics, art and literature. The same two salient aspects would in each case be apparent — morality stood apart from history and its concern lay with the condition of man. Acton counselled the historian: 'Resist your time — take a foothold outside it' (Add. MSS. 5011). The moral sphere, which was his own foothold, constituted the balancing truth to the romantic attitude of identification with time. If, with one foot, so to speak, Acton stood in the depths of the historical process, with the other he stood in the unchanging non-historical world.

What did he see from this dual vantage-point? To the romantic historian who identifies himself with time and history, the world appears as an infinity of diversities. He comes to be aware of a vast number of different historical situations, personalities and systems. There are no parallels, repetitions or resemblances. In the eternal flux of time, without beginning and without end, there are no fixed points; there are only changes. And each of the changes is different from any other change. The only constant is change itself. To the moralist, however, on the outside looking in, this view is erroneous and illusory. If the moralist fixes his gaze, as he must do, on the

treatment of man by man, he finds one constant, one fixed point: the condition of man. He finds that this does not vary, however varied the historical location. It is in this sense that Acton held all history to be contemporary.

He had a dry sense of humour. His earnestness was disguised by a 'levity', as he himself wrote, in which there was more than a hint of self-mockery. Amongst the notes, it is a quotation taken from Sheridan's *School for Scandal* that seems to be intended to sum up Acton's vision of history, when viewed from the combined angle of the romantic and the moralist. Sir Peter Teazle is speaking: 'We live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better' (quoted Add. MSS. 5517). The point is reinforced when Acton expressly echoes Schopenhauer's attack on the 'illusory' nature of history. It records, says Acton, 'that which is always the same' (Add. MSS. 4921).

In more precise and concrete terms, that which emerges (when the 'romantic' is subsumed in the 'moral') is the conversion of history into 'a frightful monument of sin' (H.O.F. p. 568) compounded of man's inhumanity to man. Therefore, despite all the changes in attendant circumstances, Acton could and did speak of a 'new Martyrology' in which he made no distinction between 'conquest, war in masses, negro slavery, manufactures, oppression of the poor by the rich, exploitation of the lower race by the higher, ferocities of the criminal law' (Add. MSS. 4960). On another occasion a note spoke of 'crime' as the enemy of progress — a crime manifested in persecution, torture, slavery, the negro code, 'the judges and jurists who tormented and burnt witches, the authors of the machinery for sending souls to hell, at Ratisbon and Nuremberg. Not only the shippers and slave-drivers, but the law-givers, the judges, the clergy were involved in this guilt. And this, not in the obscurity of the tenth century, on the verge of paganism and barbarism, but in the negotiations of Utrecht and etc.' (Add. MSS. 5011). As an important consequence of this analysis, war did not constitute a separate problem of its own. It came into the same universal and eternal category of man's inhumanity to man. There were, Acton wrote, 'cognate states of mind' involved in wars, religious persecution, trials for witchcraft and the cruelties practised on criminals' (Add. MSS. 4919).

The contemporaneity of history may also be considered from a second aspect. The fate of man, either collectively or in isolation, shows only one side of the picture. The other side, distinct, however inseparably connected, revealed the public elements complementary to the individually or collectively human aspect. There existed for Acton only two kinds of politics — Machiavellian and 'moral'. The first was characterized by a lack of respect for man, whereas

the second made this respect its foremost principle, perhaps even its only principle. This was the over-riding qualitative distinction. It did not of course mean that, although 'moral' politics might be considered en bloc, immoral Machiavellian politics might not show very important quantitative distinctions. It has already been seen, for example, how party government, though coming within the category of immoral, might still be the 'most moral of all'. Given the ultimate distinction however, Acton considered all past and present politics to be Machiavellian. In this respect, even though he utterly rejected the notion of basing politics on the urge for power, he none the less described Machiavelli as 'an excellent man unjustly maligned' (Add. MSS. 5011). The injustice was all the more reprehensible for Machiavelli's 'political veracity' had been tested and proved in the three centuries following his death (H.O.F. p. 212. Machiavelli lived from 1469-1527). 'Few can throw a stone at him', Acton noted. 'Not the admirers of Elizabeth, Mary, Cromwell, James II, William III, Napoleon, neither Orangeman nor Jacobite, nor Bonapartist'. He quotes too, an unnamed author's *Vindication of Machiavel*: 'Who intends to express a dishonest man calls him a Machiavellian; they might as well say, he was a Straffordian or a Marlborian' (Add. MSS. 5449). If Strafford or Marlborough, why not a host of others? In the introduction that he contributed to L. A. Burd's edition of *The Prince*, Acton mentioned some of these others — Catherine de Medici, Francis Bacon, Morley, Cardinals Retz and Richelieu, Hegel, Mommsen, Ranke, Carlyle and Fichte.

This catalogue of Machiavellians, extensive and illustrious though it is, still does not exhaust the significance of the doctrine. When Acton wrote that 'the monument' to the memory of Caesar Borgia (i.e. *The Prince*) 'has secretly fascinated half the politicians in the world' (L.M.H. p. 42) he was making on his own confession a parlous under-estimate. He was omitting the other half from the operation of a universal judgment. Acton's appreciation of Machiavelli reaches its purest and culminating point when he writes that he 'reduced to a code the wickedness of public men' (L.F.R. p. 300); or when he notes that Machiavelli 'really defines the separation of ethics and politics — common practice reduced to theory' (Add. MSS. 4976).

Such is the obverse side to the perennial abuse of man. Man is abused because politics are abused. Both phenomena are interdependent, and both express different aspects of the same reality. There is a certain solidarity of evil which, if it appears in public life, will infallibly extend to and determine the abuse of man. Conversely, if man is abused, the eye is infallibly turned to the existence of the abuse of politics. There is, in short, an unchanging and constant crisis in human affairs, all of which is summed up in the contem-

poraneity of history. 'Everything new is old', concludes Acton, 'especially in politics' (Add. MSS. 5670).

This view is usually that of the great pessimists. It is the voice of *Ecclesiastes* which sees nothing new under the sun. It is the voice of Schopenhauer. With some qualification it is also the voice of Burckhardt, who saw history's 'constant' in 'suffering, striving and acting man, as he is, always was and will be'. It is no less the voice of those who, such as Nietzsche and Spengler, saw man as bound to an eternal cycle of repetition. How much of this may be found in Acton is clear enough. He too said with Schopenhauer that all history is to be found in Herodotus and that all subsequent happenings provide but additional embroidery on the abiding theme of man's inhumanity to man. Yet Acton did not conclude that this would *eternally* be history's theme. He did not conclude that man would never escape from his 'human bondage'. He did not conclude that the constant crisis afflicting mankind would never be resolved. To the truth embodied in the contemporaneity of history was again a 'balancing' truth — the possibility of progress.

5

It is characteristic of Acton's dialectical method of thought that, however grotesque the word progress may sound on the lips of such a disenchanted observer, the notion of progress is inspired and provoked precisely by the notion of the contemporaneity of history. History, by and large, shows man enslaved, tortured and persecuted in a variety of manners and circumstances. Would it be reasonable, Acton is asking, to suppose that this is fated to be man's eternal lot? Would it be reasonable to suppose that the divine image in man, and thereby God Himself, is fated to be eternally injured in this way? His answer is a clear denunciation of the irrationality of those who would affirm such a proposition. History, he writes, 'is a scene of guilt, a record of sin and crime. The wicked flourish like the bay tree. The virtuous expect to suffer persecution . . . That gives an imperfect vision of Providence, of divine wisdom and omnipotence — unless you can show progress. Divine judgments won't do' (Add. MSS. 4981). Or again, without progress 'there is no *raison d'être* for the world'. A person, therefore, who does not believe in progress 'questions the divine government' (Add. MSS. 5641, 4987).

This notion of a progress that would justify history, or redeem history from its status as 'a record of sin and crime' differs radically from the usual notion. This latter Acton termed 'the religion of those that have none' (Add. MSS. 5011). His own view, on the other hand, has all the characteristics of the messianic hope, couched in terms of respect for the human personality. Every description or definition of progress that Acton made bears this imprint: 'Justice,

Equality, Liberty', or 'Charity, Toleration, relief of poverty... purity of public men', or 'consideration for the individual, not for society; wounded and captive, accused prisoner; condemned convict; afflicted, in body or in mind...' (Add. MSS. 5588, 5002, 4986). It was because he saw the rational certainty of this redemption that Acton was never mocked or depressed by history. His vision of the transfiguration of the world — although expressed in this-worldly terms — corresponds to the degradation of man's historical existence. It requires to be the embodiment of perfect morality in order fully to compensate for the trials of the imperfect morality of history.

This culminating point of history was not susceptible of gradual attainment. Acton makes no allowance for any transitional stage between history and the future. Nor would it have been logically possible for him to do so. It would not be reasonable to expect the millenium to emerge as the product of a history whose universal impact was to confound the good and the evil and to subject all to the corrupting influence of power. Progress therefore must take on the aspect of a sudden transformation, an apocalyptic change, a reversal of all previously existing relationships. It is in this sense that Acton was a revolutionary and in this sense also that he described progress as a revolution. 'What was the Revolution?' he asked himself; and he answered 'The defeat of History. History dethroned' (Add. MSS. 4906).

Yet if the dethronement of history could be deduced on *a priori* grounds, it by no means followed that the victory could be entrusted to this alone. It by no means followed that human intervention could be dispensed with. On the contrary, despite the known weakness of man, Acton none the less held to the necessity of his co-operation in the task of redemption — under the tutelage of history. 'If Pagan and Christian can honestly find room to differ about Julian, French and English about Napoleon, Loyalist and Republican about Washington, Protestant and Catholic about Luther, Whig and Tory about Burke — History teaches in vain' (Add. MSS. 4907). How was this aim achieved? History, as Acton conceived it, was the incorporation of impartiality — again not in the usual sense of fairness but in the sense of universal morality. History, if it were well and truly informed by morality, for the very reason of its liberation from the claims of fairness, would be all the freer to heed the moral claim. 'True impartiality... judges resolutely' (H.E.S. p. 354). Once the romantic's historical viewpoint has had its say and has then been subsumed and overcome in that of the moralist, so that its timeless aspect in respect of the treatment of man by man emerges, the effect is, as it were, to remove history from history. If it is assumed that Acton's morality is truly based and truly applied by the historian, the judgments that he comes to deliver belong not to

himself but to the impartial and universal code to which he merely gives expression.

This can be put differently. The historian ultimately comes to measure the real by the standards of the ideal. Acton points to Plato as an illustration of the result. He says of him that 'there had been no stronger advocate of revolution'. It was Plato, Acton explained, who had 'preserved the belief in ideal politics and the notion of judging the powers of this world by a standard from heaven' (H.O.F. p. 71). A note makes the same point with equal clarity: 'The doctrine of ideas is the doctrine of revolution. In comparing what is with what ought to be, Plato disclaims arbitrary invention. He sets his aim at the thought of God. He follows a Kingdom that exists in the ideal world' (Add. MSS. 5422). Let us take this process a stage further: in what way is the doctrine of ideas the doctrine of revolution? The answer is ultimately to be found in Acton's belief — though it is never explicitly asserted — that man cannot tolerate the knowledge of his own degradation. For if the historian seeks the thought of God in the real world, then there *spontaneously* emerges from his search a gigantic and sustained criticism of reality. There is no question of the historian's 'arbitrary invention'. But it is very much a question of self-condemnation. 'Let a man criminate himself' Acton wrote to Creighton (Add. MSS. 6871). In precisely the same way, though on an infinitely-larger scale, the world also condemned itself. It was the morality embodied in history that made the condemnation articulate.

The condemnation was such as to divest the institutions of the world, in whatever form, of the sanction that gave them power and of the influence that they claimed to exert over men's minds. 'History is an iconoclast . . . It shows that three great things are not what they seem — Fame, antiquity and power' (Add. MSS. 4981, 5461). It showed the 'false morality of practical politics' (Add. MSS. 5011). It showed how often the great man was also a bad man. It showed, also, not the 'glory' of war but 'the effects of wounds . . . the scenes in the hospitals, the ruined homes, the devastation' (Add. MSS. 4909, 4981). Such was the truth about his situation that man could not tolerate. His only solution lay in a spontaneous revolt against the situation itself. The truth offered man this opportunity of redemption. 'Knowledge of history means choice of ancestors' (Add. MSS. 4981).

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF IMPERIALISM

R. KOEBNER

WHEN we compare the emotive orbit within which the word *Imperialism* moves today with its sphere of movement half a century ago, we are struck by a great contrast. Today the word resounds in every quarter of the globe; it has been incorporated into every language. Indeed, the measure of the respect in which a nation is held, seems almost to depend on the frequency with which it is blamed for imperialism by some other nation. In 1900, however, the position was very different. In most languages the word, if known at all, was known as a newcomer. It was only to English writers and readers that it was familiar, and with them it belonged first to the vocabulary of party strife. Two years earlier the term had appeared in the political vocabulary of the United States of America; in England it could look back to a somewhat longer career. English party strife had engendered the connotations which later enabled the term to become a world-power. To this day there persists the conviction, wherever *Imperialism* is used, that it is a typically British phenomenon; and this conviction springs from the manner in which the word was first employed.

The slogan, 'British Imperialism', is, of course, emotive rather than scientific, and much that it is intended to convey is remote from historical reality. The concept has come to denote a policy which satisfies an irrepressible urge to territorial expansion. But the historian knows that few if any of the wars which issued in British conquests overseas was waged for the purpose of such conquest. 'Imperialism' conjures up the picture of a nation perpetually pre-occupied with world-interests — a picture which does not at all correspond with considerable periods of English history. Further, a common interpretation of the word makes the economic exploitation of backward peoples appear an essential element of 'Imperialism'; the concept of 'British Imperialism' consequently suggests a nation which educated its children to exploit other peoples. But the historian knows that for almost two centuries the severest control of such activity has been practised and constitutes a fundamental element in British political morality. No responsible historian could align his estimate of predominant trends and qualities in British policy and national character with the images conjured up by the word 'Imperialism' in its commonly accepted meanings. And yet,

paradoxically enough, these pejorative meanings were originally hatched in the discussions of Englishmen.

The word 'Imperialism' is obviously rooted in the ancient and more simple notions of *Empire* and of the *Imperial*; honourable, if perhaps flamboyant, in their connotation. But even these words, in English usage, acquired a derogatory meaning; the activity they signified was at least suspect. And further, a second momentous change of meaning was effected in English usage: the concept of Empire came to stand for a political system in which many countries, not naturally coherent and possibly even very distant from one another, are held together by the predominant power of a single country, the imperial country in the fullest sense of the word. This meaning has been read into earlier uses of the word Empire only after it had been established in English usage. Of course the words *Empire* and *Imperial* spring from the Latin word *Imperium*, and it might be contended that their modern meanings were present in Roman usage, that the concept of the 'British Empire' is merely the counterpart of the *Imperium Romanum*. This assumption is certainly a matter of implicit belief with not a few historians. But, as every Latin dictionary shows, the line of descent has not been as direct as this belief would imply. *Imperium Romanum* is not exactly a classical term but rather a medieval and modern one. Latin precision had little use for a term which mingles the meanings of authority and of vast territory. Poetical and rhetorical style has, indeed, on occasion been liable to such ambiguous reading, but it was never countenanced by official or doctrinal usage. The word *Imperium* was rarely understood to signify territory or peoples. It meant authority. From Cicero down to the Antonines one of its connotations was, indeed, that of the power maintained by the Roman people in the *orbis Romanus*. This implication however did not persist until the end of ancient Rome, and was restored to historical memory in modern times only.

Classical usage, then, is insufficient to account for the quality acquired by such terms as 'British Empire' and 'Imperialism' in modern times. The concept *Imperium* had to undergo a variety of changes before these notions could appear. First, its geographical connotation had to assert itself, in which it would be commonly understood to relate equally to supreme authority and to the country or countries dominated by this authority: in short, it had to acquire the same ambiguity as the notion of 'the state' has acquired. This change appeared in the *Imperium Romanum* of the Germans, which from the day of its creation was understood to renew the Empire of Augustus and Constantine. And from the eleventh century we find *Imperium* used by publicists and chroniclers to signify not only the dignity of the Emperor but also the territory and peoples of his

dominion — the *Reich*. But until the fifteenth century the name was reserved for the Roman Empire, ancient and medieval. It was used as a proper name, not as a collective noun. A first step towards a more elastic interpretation was made by precisely that treatise which most emphatically insisted on the exclusive dignity of the German-Roman Emperor, Dante's *De Monarchia*. *Est ergo temporalis Monarchia, quam dicunt Imperium, unius principatus et super omnes in tempore*. Dante took *Monarchia* as well as *Imperium* to signify what we would call 'hegemony'. By such an interpretation it was made possible to apply the word *Imperium* to political systems imagined to represent analogies to the Roman Empire. Orthodox, scholarly opinion could at first accept such an analogy only with reference to kingdoms which had existed and perished in Antiquity — e.g. to the three *regna* of *Daniel* Ch. 7 which had preceded the Roman Empire.

The next step in the career of *Imperium* was taken when the word was applied to the four monarchies taken together. This was the achievement of those scholars who should have been the last to tamper with classical nomenclature, the Humanists. Eneas Silvio set a conspicuous example. In a pamphlet of 1446 dedicated to the Emperor Frederick III (again, that is to say, in the context of an argument which insisted on the monopoly of the German ruler crowned in Rome), he explicitly called the monarchies of Daniel *imperia*. He preferred this plural form to *monarchiae* because, so he assumed, it was real Latin, not adopted Greek. It is uncommon for linguistic error to be so creative as in this case it turned out to be. Henceforth *Imperium* was recognized by the arbiters of correct usage as appropriate to a political unit of outstanding significance. And the final consequence of this recognition was that the word became applied not only to the canonical 'Empires' of which the visibly decaying Roman-German Empire was the last, but also to such states as claimed a prominent position in the present world. This transference of meaning branched out in different directions. In literary and general use, the terms *Imperium*, *Empire*, *Imperial*, came to indicate royal or, more generally, political dignity of superlative quality. Such a meaning underlies Shakespeare's use of the word 'imperial', for instance 'the most imperial monarch' in Florizel's description of love in *The Winter's Tale*. On the other hand, it enabled Hugo Grotius to speak of *Imperia* with reference to sovereign states. And some decades later (1672) Sir William Temple saw reason to declare: 'A nation extended over vast tracts of land and numbers of people arrives in time at the ancient name of kingdom, or *modern of empire*.' He felt that the sanction of classical Latin was missing. So did the linguists of the *Académie française*. Only in the third edition of their dictionary (1718) was it admitted, *sub voce*.

Empire: 'Il se dit aussi de tous les pays qui sont sous la domination d'un grand roi'. The example given was *l'empire français*.

Scholarly and poetical style were not necessarily in keeping either with official nomenclature or with common usage. French kings and their servants were too proud of their *royaume* to make use of the permission to call it an *empire*. To English official language Henry VIII had given a different turn. Encouraged clearly by the humanistic invention of *imperia* he made his Parliament declare in 1533 'that this realm of England is an Empire'. He gave 'the imperial crown' a recognized place in legislative acts. These proclamations of the 'imperial' style were supposed to define the claims of the royal head of the Established Church. Accordingly the oath formula laid down in the Elizabethan Act of Supremacy led to the retention of 'the imperial crown of this realm' as a requisite of official language. This expression was, however, also seen to be particularly serviceable on occasions when the authority of the king was to be demonstrated to his Irish subjects. The union of the crowns of England and Scotland by James I added another reason for using the word 'imperial' on ceremonial occasions. And, for the first time, the formula 'The British Empire' appeared. But this term was rarely used; and it did not add to its popularity when, towards the end of the seventeenth century, it was given a collateral reference to the colonies. Nor was it assumed at that time that to hold dominion beyond the seas implied a specific title to the name of Empire. The Spanish Monarchy was never called the Spanish Empire. 'Monarchy' also got the better of 'Empire' in relation to the ruler whose ascendancy in Europe became a terror to his neighbours. Louis XIV was credited with aspiring to *la monarchie universelle*.

But a few decades later, from 1760 onward, a great change occurred. By Englishmen, Scotsmen and Colonials the name 'the British Empire' came to be widely accepted, and it was interpreted as doing justice to the fact that the power of the nation had spread over distant parts of the globe. The Overseas Empire began to give substance to the term. The new linguistic habit was expressive of a singular historical experience. It was a spontaneous recognition of the victories of Wolfe in Canada and of Clive in India, victories which had brought home the grandeur of the Empire to the mother-country and to the old colonies. Among the earliest testimonies to the new connotation and the new popularity of the expression 'The British Empire' may be mentioned Benjamin Franklin's *Interest of Great Britain* and the homage paid to William Pitt in the Latin inscription on the foundation stone of Blackfriars Bridge. Another impressive piece of evidence is provided by Jonathan Mayhew, pastor in Boston, Mass. In 1760, in a thanksgiving address on the

reduction of Quebec he still looked forward to the advance of religion 'throughout this spacious kingdom'. But about six years later he had another reason for public thanksgiving, the repeal of the Stamp Act. And this event, so he now proclaimed, was 'of the utmost importance to the whole British Empire whose peace and prosperity we ought ardently to desire'. This was shortly after the Parliament of Westminster had applied to the colonies the principles proclaimed in the Irish Declaratory Act of 1720, and in this context had introduced the term 'the Imperial crown and Parliament'. Generally, the American crisis did much to give to the expression 'the British Empire' a technical function in discussions concerning the relation between the mother-country and the colonies. So widespread was the use of the word in this meaning that Edmund Burke in his Speech on Conciliation could take it for granted that the word Empire designated 'the aggregate of many states under one common head'. In fact, this was a novel interpretation of the old word. And moreover, Burke's acceptance of the term implied quite clearly that the notion as such did not signify a doctrine of British supremacy and colonial submission. Though the expression on occasion voiced national pride, it was, at the same time, used simply as an expedient for designating the complex administrative unit which had arisen. Because of this technical character, the term could be retained in relation to the overseas possessions even when the most valuable part of them had been irretrievably lost by the War of Independence. One continued to speak of the British Empire though the name for a time aroused painful reminiscences.

Soon, however, a second connotation accrued to the word. After the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland the expression 'The British Empire' came to refer especially to the United Kingdom of the British Isles: thenceforth the Parliament of Westminster was commonly called the Imperial Parliament. Indeed, until the last decades of the nineteenth century the expression 'the British Empire' was taken to refer either exclusively, or at least in the main, to Great Britain and Ireland. J. R. McCulloch could go as far as to insert the expression in the title of a book which emphatically stated that the dependencies overseas constituted no vital part of the British Empire.

Meanwhile, in France a different linguistic evolution was taking place. By making the expression 'L'Empire Français' legitimate, the dictionary of the Academy had furthered its use under the later Bourbons. After the Revolution the expression was still more welcome. Its classical Roman associations made it an apt expression of national pride. The name *l'Empire français* was taken to be expressive of the fact that the state of France had always been the state of the French nation. This interpretation was one of the reasons why

Napoleon chose the title of *Empereur des Français* for his new hereditary dignity. By this act, the name *l'Empire français* became the official glorification of the nation itself. Orators of the *Tribunat* gave eloquent expression to this interpretation: a nation proudly bestowed the name of an Empire on itself.

Ten years later, however, fresh events gave a new turn to this linguistic history. The German Empire, which had been 'the Empire' for so many centuries, had vanished. But so had France as an *Empire*. Instead, there was on the Continent the Emperor of Austria; and the Czar, called Emperor in the West, had become an important figure in European politics. At the same time the British overseas empire had emerged from the war as a vast and stable edifice such as it had never been before. It was without a competitor, and it was almost unassailable. Nevertheless, it was some time before the expression 'British Empire' denoted a matter for pride. The period from about 1830 to 1870 has even been referred to as a time of imperial defeatism. This is in some degree justified by reason of the current opinion that colonies were of no lasting value, and that separation was a possible outcome that would not be regrettable. One should not exaggerate this sceptical trend; it had no serious influence on practical politics. But it demonstrates an important negative fact: no national idea of the British Empire was current against which such scepticism could have appeared an insult. 'The British Empire' was no less a technical expression than the Austrian or Russian Empire, though the expression was coming to be applied to an Empire of quite another structure. It was, as it were, a short hand expression for heterogenous administrative concerns: territorial wars in India; abolition of slavery and its consequences at the Cape and in Jamaica; tariff questions in relation to Canada and (after the establishment of Free Trade) the commercial independence of this colony and of others; systematic colonization in Australia and New Zealand; the granting of colonial self-government; and so on. Each of these questions was to be treated on its own merits by the appropriate official departments and occasionally in Parliament. The same applied to questions of new acquisitions, and relinquishments of territory. On the whole, in spite of all scepticism, more enlargement than relinquishment was effected. But neither Parliament nor public opinion rose to the idea of Imperial interests as forming a whole of problems such as demanded continuous and comprehensive survey.

This fact calls for closer inquiry. It has a social as well as a political aspect. The Empire offered, no doubt, an opening for the most varied activities over a vast area. For the farmer, the engineer, the tradesman, the banker, the civil servant, the soldier there were new and growing opportunities. Nor did they pass unheeded by

enterprising Britons. Their number was, it is true, kept down by still more promising attractions offered by the westward movement in the United States. But this competition provides an insufficient explanation of the main negative fact, namely that those elements of the nation, who had a stake in the Empire or were on the look-out for one, did not combine to arouse at home the interest of the public at large in the Empire at large. For example, the books written for the benefit of emigrants to the colonies do not even raise the question of a national interest involved in such emigration. Indeed, it could scarcely be clearer that the different vocational interests vested in the Empire did not care or look for co-ordination. This lack of mutual contact presumably points to the fact that the Empire had expanded rapidly in quarters of the globe distant from one another and offering different opportunities in many environments. These vast spaces were not easily visualized as a single field of activity opening a future for the nation as a whole. Indeed, it was not till 1867, and then only as a consequence of an expensive journey round the globe, that Charles Dilke conceived the idea of a Greater Britain outside the British Isles. And even Dilke was slow to admit that the unity of Greater Britain was bound up with the unity of the Empire.

Nor, for the greater part of the century, did discussion on foreign politics and armaments provide any reason to remind the nation of its responsibilities towards the Empire. British statesmen were not harassed by any continuous concern for the defence of the widespread dependencies of their country. This freedom from anxiety is to be explained in the first place by the naval superiority of Britain which was never endangered for a long period. As Professor Graham has shown, it is just because of this confidence that until late in the nineteenth century naval armaments did not keep pace with the growth of investments in the Empire. There was, however, one Imperial possession which gave rise to constant concern: India. And this concern was indirectly responsible for the whole policy of Great Britain in Eastern affairs, including the only major war in which it engaged after 1815, the Crimean War. The analysis of the attitude of the British public towards the Crimean War and towards India is still far from satisfactory. Whatever has been stated concerning changing tides of enthusiasm and indifference does not do justice to one striking fact, again to be defined in negative terms. The name 'British Empire' was not a prominent catchword in these crises. Two general assertions were certainly accepted by most Englishmen. First, in India England had a mission of civilization; and secondly, Russia was to be dreaded not only because it might imperil the routes to India but also because its power in Europe constituted a check to progressive constitutional principles. The

concepts embodied in the term 'civilization' in general and the term 'Europe' in general represented ideas which in their interconnection signified values of greater moral appeal than those suggested by the term 'Empire'. To countenance the oriental and Indian policy of the government a readier justification could be found in the argument that one was fighting for the general cause of Europe or of civilization than that an Empire was at stake. In the war against Russia this interpretation could draw confirmation from the fact that England did not fight single-handed but acted in co-operation with France and with the connivance of Austria.

The issue of the Canadian border was the only one which involved England in diplomatic trouble over her Imperial engagements; and here the antagonist was the other Anglo-Saxon power. The war scare aroused by the Trent incident of 1861 gave rise to considerable anxiety. But the danger really implied in the affair — the danger that Britain could once more be drawn into a war on behalf of her Empire in America — was appreciated only when the crisis had blown over. It supplied an argument to those critics who looked askance at vital parts of the Imperial connection — who wished to emancipate, not the colonies from Britain, but Britain from the colonies. The first and most radical manifesto which was written in this vein (Goldwin Smith's book of 1863) had *The Empire* for its title. It is memorable for having undertaken for the first time to depreciate the value read into this name. Nevertheless, the actual significance of the book has been somewhat overestimated; and it has never seen a second edition. But an assertion implicit in its title, and sometimes expressed in its text, provokes comment. Goldwin Smith takes for granted that the name of Empire gives expression to national pride and radiates a permanent atmosphere of seduction that gives a meretricious charm to the futile politics of prestige. It is against this false pride that he protests. In his time this apprehension was clearly unfounded. The name of Empire was not a symbol of pride to most of the compatriots of Goldwin Smith. That he could arrive at such a misunderstanding is odd enough to call for explanation.

The reason is to be found across the Channel. In France the name of Empire had become an emblem of national pride once more. Louis Napoleon had re-established *l'Empire*. He persuaded his nation to think of this name as the embodiment of a political and historical idea. *L'Empire* once more pointed to pride as an important factor of national life, pride taken in the monarchy and its splendour, in the army and in prestige abroad. At the same time the imperial title was intended to proclaim that the monarch was legitimately empowered to represent the nation and that he could be trusted to promote the welfare of all classes. This new imperial idea was clearly at variance with English notions of sound government. It was seen to

maintain itself by precarious escapades. To denote its character, and at the same time to express disapproval public speech soon after the Crimean War had found for it a name: *Imperialism*. Goldwin Smith had an ardent dislike for the French political genius as it expressed itself in the Napoleonic *Empire*, and he suspected that the British Empire might be infected by similar maladies; hence the title of his book. At that time he was perhaps alone in confusing the French concept *l'Empire*, and 'Empire' in the English sense. But this confusion was to be renewed fifteen years later in a wider context and a new world situation.

This was in 1877-8 — the year when a grave crisis in British foreign policy was either overcome by Lord Beaconsfield or, as his opponents said, created by him. The appearance of a connection between 'Imperialism' and the interpretation of British politics is closely bound up with this episode. The rise of imperial notions at this juncture was, indeed, also conditioned by Disraeli's former career. He had a personal affection for the concept of 'the Imperial'; he relished the words *Imperium* and *Empire*. They appear repeatedly in the political manifestos of his youth and in his later speeches. They are expressive of his interest in national prestige but have originally no direct reference to the British Overseas Empire. But after 1870, the terms were twice brought into prominence by him in connection with these interests. One of these occasions was the Crystal Palace speech of June 1872, which charged the Liberals with having done their utmost to estrange the colonies and disintegrate the Empire of England. The other was his eloquent advocacy of the Royal Titles Bill 1876 which bestowed the title *Empress of India* on Queen Victoria.

The passage in the Crystal Palace speech which deals with the colonies suggests a difficult problem. It professes interests which neither before nor afterwards were properly considered by Disraeli. It is in the main — what most interpreters forget — a criticism in retrospect, not a programme or statement of policy. As a criticism, it is a series of misrepresentations and was manifestly drawn up in a hurry — in short, it is a piece of irresponsible opposition rhetoric. At the end, however, the indictment leads on to an exhortation which almost forgets the colonies and concentrates on the emotional values implied in the name of Empire. The nation, so Disraeli proclaims, will soon have to decide between national and cosmopolitan principles, to decide (that is to say) between 'a comfortable England' and 'a great country, an imperial country, a country, where your sons, when they rise, rise to paramount positions, and obtain not merely the esteem of their countrymen, but command the respect of the world'. It is this tirade, and not the retrospective colonial programme that precedes it, which gives the speech an important place

in the emergence of the concept of Imperialism. In its time, however, the whole section of the speech which dealt with the Empire fell flat in its effect on public opinion in England. It met with almost no response in the press. Disraeli drew the consequences: he never returned to the subject of the colonial Empire. He made no use of it in the election campaign of 1874.

The title, *Empress of India* (as was realized by advocates of colonial interests at that time), had nothing to do with the British Empire seen as a whole. Moreover, in advocating it Disraeli practised courtesy rather than politics: he understood how deeply the Queen had the matter at heart. But again the effect on public opinion was disappointing. The bill met with strong criticism in both Houses of Parliament and in the press; it would have been withdrawn had not the parliamentary majority realized that the Queen would feel mortified by such action. The debates made clear that a demonstrative use of the language of Imperialism might be resented by the British public. Or rather, perhaps it was the bill which made the word suspect, for shortly before it had proved somewhat attractive. Probably on account of the fact that Disraeli's predilection for the term had been manifested by his speeches of 1872, Conservative back-benchers had resorted to Imperial phraseology on the occasion of the annexation of the Fiji Islands. The word had also served to glorify the purchase of the Suez Canal shares: in this context the *Daily Telegraph* had spoken of 'Imperial interests'. But in 1876 this newspaper was more cautious. The language of Imperialism, intruding into the royal style which was part of the English constitution, was seen to be a dangerous innovation. It recalled both the imperial gestures of Napoleon III and the new German Empire, which in its own manner relied on a combination of popularity and truculence.

This had been an embarrassing experience. And when the Eastern crisis reopened in the same year Disraeli realized that he would impair his freedom of action if he were to proclaim a policy of imperial interests. Accordingly he behaved with restraint, and until the last phase his use of the language of imperialism was unobtrusive. Nevertheless, it is clear that this restraint was burdensome. In the question of the Ottoman Empire British interests were diametrically opposed to Russian policy, which clearly aimed at pre-ponderance in the Near East, and thereby spelled danger to the British Empire in India. Moreover, it was now impossible to counteract Russian intentions by a European coalition like that which had fought the Crimean war. The appearance of the German Empire had brought about a displacement in the system of Continental powers, and neither Germany, nor the Habsburg monarchy, nor France could be expected to be willing partners against Russia. If

Russia was to be opposed by arms Britain had to take the initiative on behalf of British interests; and these interests related to a vital part of the British Empire. They were, in fact, 'Imperial' interests. But after the storm of protest aroused by the Bulgarian atrocities had died down, the British public was far from being united in sharing Disraeli's views, further still from being united in preparing for active interference. To the large section of the nation which followed Gladstone, even the name 'British interests' sounded suspect after that term had served to shield the 'unspeakable Turk'. The Prime Minister, then, would have had a strong incentive to emphasize that the interests of the British Empire were at stake and that such imperial interests were paramount national interests, but he knew also that the word 'imperial' could all too easily recoil on him: instead of being won over, the nation might be repelled by what it would recognize as a characteristic piece of rhetoric.

Disraeli's embarrassment was especially painful when, in the spring of 1877, Russia had resorted to war, and a speedy advance of her army towards Constantinople was not out of the question. Britain was ill prepared for such a situation, morally as well as materially. Moral preparation was necessary to make the public agree to rearmament, but Disraeli for the time being could do little to forward this preparation. However, at this juncture he found an important voluntary assistant: the *Daily Telegraph*, which only a year before had displayed nervousness about the introduction of the imperial title. Anyone who looks into the British press of that time will perceive that this newspaper stood out as the champion of a pro-Turkish policy under the watch-word of *imperial interests*. For many months in 1877-8 this concept is frequently appealed to in its columns, and it seems clear that the plugging of this theme in connection with the Eastern Crisis was a piece of editorial policy.

Indeed, there is a letter from the editor (Edward Levy-Lawson) addressed to Disraeli's private secretary, Montague Corry, dated May 17th, 1877 and preserved among the Disraeli papers at Hughenden Manor, which expresses deep concern about the military and political situation: 'Russia, say in August, will be able to dictate a peace hostile to England.' To avoid a conclusion so shameful for England and so detrimental to the government the writer suggests that public opinion must be shaken up by lively propaganda: 'The country will defend its interests. But these interests must have champions with courage in their hearts and bold and national utterances on their lips.' This is the concluding sentence of a letter which opened with the words: 'I am in a big fight and I know how to use my guns.' And the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* leave us in no doubt about the bold and national utterances which are to be boomed out by Levy-Lawson's 'guns'. They are 'imperial' utterances; and

in this manner Levy-Lawson became one of the more notable promoters of the concept of 'British Imperialism'.

But his 'guns' did not arouse the resounding echo he hoped for. Public opinion remained divided until far into the new year. As late as January 10th, 1878 Queen Victoria wrote a pathetic letter to Disraeli expressing distress 'at the low tone which this country is inclined to hold'. She asked: 'Could not Lord Beaconsfield get something to be written though the *Daily Telegraph*, *Pall Mall* and *Post* are very strong in the right sense, to instruct the blinded country in this respect.' But Beaconsfield took no such indirect action. He preferred himself to resort openly to imperial language when the hour of drastic action had struck. It came in April 1878 when Salisbury's negotiations for the Berlin Congress were under way and Beaconsfield demonstrated to Russia the seriousness of the situation by calling up the reserves and ordering Indian troops to Malta. In the speech in which he announced these decisions in the House of Lords he raised the standard of 'the British Empire'. In a confession of faith he said: 'I have ever considered that Her Majesty's Government of whatever party formed, are the trustees of that Empire. That Empire was formed by the enterprise and energy of your ancestors, my lords, and it is one of a very peculiar character. I know no example of it, either in ancient or modern history. No Caesar or Charlemagne ever presided over a dominion so peculiar.' And so on.

Such language was sounded again when Beaconsfield and Salisbury returned from Berlin and the results of the Congress were explained to the House of Lords and to the nation at large. It is especially significant that on one of these occasions Lord Salisbury abandoned his usual composure and proclaimed that 'we were striving to pick up the thread — the broken thread — of England's old imperial traditions'. The *Daily Telegraph* was jubilant. This newspaper now declared that the Prime Minister had been 'from first to last one of the few public men of this time who comprehended the large meaning of these words "the British Empire"'. And on its own behalf the newspaper wrote: 'Empires nowadays must go forward or go back. Almost our exact expressions were adopted by official lips and made the basis of the policy of the Cabinet.'

This self-praise was not unjustified. But it was as fateful as ever self-praise was. The Liberals, already disquieted by the prospects of foreign entanglements resulting from the new policy, now took alarm at the concept under the sign of which this policy was being propagated. The *Daily News* wrote on July 23rd: 'We may remark that the absurd misuse of the word Imperial is becoming of late an intolerable nuisance.' The annoyance expressed here was voiced repeatedly during the next weeks, among others by Glad-

stone. But the Liberal politician who most emphatically took exception to the language of imperialism was Robert Lowe. The days when, as an Australian politician, he had warmly emphasized the value of the imperial connection lay far behind him. In later years he had been critical of everything that seemed aggressive and exotic in Disraeli's policy. To the October issue of the *Fortnightly Review* he contributed a long philippic: its title was *Imperialism*. With this article the modern career of the word in its relation to Great Britain really begins.

It begins, that is to say, with an invective which has nothing at all to do with the Colonial Empire and only in passing with Indian problems. The article focussed on the foreign policy of the government. And however much one may appreciate his high moral seriousness, the godfather of the word cannot be absolved from having bestowed on the child two precarious boons — two connotations, that is to say, which have proved fateful misrepresentations. Lowe asserts that 'Imperialism' was a word brought into circulation by the present Tory government itself. He asks rhetorically whether good traditional English policy should now be replaced by 'what in the language of our Secretaries of State is called Imperialism'. In fact though the Foreign Secretary had spoken of imperial traditions, neither he nor his colleagues, nor any other Tory personality had used the word 'Imperialism' so far. It had lately been turning up here and there in critical utterances, but Lowe was the first to give prominence to it. And it was only because the word was not as yet encumbered by any assertive interpretations that Lowe could make it the symbol of a policy which was alleged to have abandoned any compatibility with moral principles. ('What does Imperialism mean? It means the assertion of absolute force over others . . . The triumph of Imperialism is most complete when power is most clearly manifested. And, of course, the victory is doubled when the victory is not only over weakness but over right.' Supporters of the government, Lowe goes on to say, tell us 'that the question is between a great and a little England. Whether there may not also be a choice sometimes between a happy and a great, between an Imperial and a just England we are never to consider'.)

These are only samples of the outbreaks of indignation which accompany the word as it sets out on the critical period of its history. This indignation clearly could not have intruded so easily and so violently had it not been from the outset attached to the notion of 'the Imperial' already in the author's mind. And Lowe unconsciously discloses the source of his revulsion against Imperial notions when, in an aside, he refers to 'two samples of Imperialism', which according to him carry useful warnings. One of them is Prussia; but the other, on which he lays more emphasis, is 'the Emperor of the

French' who 'having no just title to fall back upon, determined to be ultra-Imperial'. Again it is the shadow of Napoleon III which set the concept 'Imperial' upon its modern track. And this is confirmed when Lowe, passing from foreign policy to constitutional behaviour, detects there also an 'imperialistic' manner: the high-handed policy of the government which has incurred heavy responsibilities without consulting the Parliament.

Lowe's article in the *Fortnightly Review* gave the cue to a press campaign which formed an essential element of the party feuds which filled the last years of Beaconsfield's administration. This campaign represents the first stage in the career of the term 'Imperialism' as a powerful weapon in political warfare. The history of this career cannot be recounted here. We must, however, try to do some justice to the variety of interpretation which has been added to the original meaning of the word.

First, the values associated with the word have not remained exclusively negative. It became possible, for a time at least, to profess belief in Imperialism. Secondly, the name became associated with interests which held no conspicuous place among the subjects discussed in the autumn of 1878. (Three such interests may be emphasized. The word 'Imperialism' came to reinforce the demand for the strengthening of the ties between Great Britain and the selfgoverning colonies, the Dominions. When used with this meaning the word had a decisively assertive ring. Further, the word was connected with the claim of England (or of European peoples generally) to govern peoples less advanced in civilization. The word 'Imperialism' could in this respect have an assertive as well as an defamatory ring. And thirdly, the word became the symbol of an economic doctrine. 'Imperialism' was said to be monopolistic capitalism seeking its gains in backward countries. When used in this sense the word breathes unqualified abuse.)

With regard to the assertive tone, we must not assume that serious political discussion, especially in England, ever glorified those implied characteristics of brutality and pride which Robert Lowe to his disgust found embodied in the word. The opinion that the word Imperialism might refer to something morally valuable developed in fact from a recognition of values implied in the British Empire. For some time the name 'Empire' retained a specific reference to the United Kingdom of the British Isles. The question whether conceding Home Rule for Ireland signified or did not signify a disruption of the British Empire was made a topic of debate already in Disraeli's last election campaign. Another motive for taking satisfaction in the Empire resulted from changes in social life. In the course of time the sections and individuals who had a stake in the Empire, one way or another, had grown in number.

Other reasons for the growing importance of the word 'Empire' are specifically related to two of the new meanings which, since about 1890, have been read into the term 'Imperialism': the solidarity between Britain and the Dominions on the one hand, and the tutelage of backward countries on the other. Generally speaking, neither of these developments was new. They can be traced back at least as far as Edmund Burke's American and Indian Speeches. But in the last two decades of the nineteenth century they appeared to involve problems more comprehensive and more urgent than before. Demands were voiced for closer co-operation between the mother country and the settlement colonies, soon to be called 'Dominions'. At the same time the joint activities of the Chartered Companies and of diplomacy created in the tropical Empire in Africa a large new area of colonial tutelage. Both developments, though greatly different from one another, had one element in common. They were related to Britain's position in the world and to conditions of British foreign policy. The endeavour to establish an Imperial Federation, or some equivalent for it, was of course related to questions of security. There was reason to ask what Britain's position in the world might be if new major conflicts between the powers arose at a time when the colonies had lost interest in the mother country. The acquisition of the tropical Empire was itself a result as well as a steady cause of friction with European powers. Episodes of diplomatic uneasiness, which arose from international disputes over spheres of influence or dominance in overseas countries followed one another, from the wrangling with Bismarck over South West Africa to Fashoda and its aggravating influence on British-French estrangement. The new expansion, moreover, entailed the likelihood of financial liabilities the future amount of which might well far surpass its present modest demands on the national purse. Shouldered in the beginning by private enterprise this expansion could in the course of time lead to conspicuous increases in the budget. This apprehension became evident in the affairs of Uganda in 1893. Indeed public men who saw the interconnection between colonial development and broader political interests, arrived at the broad conclusion that the nation must be taught to understand colonial matters as national affairs. Such an interpretation, as we have noticed, could scarcely look back to a tradition in the annals of public opinion. It had to be impressed on the public mind with uncommon emphasis. Champions had to arise for the cause comparable to those for whom the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* had wished in 1877 — writers who had 'bold and national utterances on their lips'. Such advocates did arise, and, to carry their point, the appropriate language in the 'nineties was that which had offered itself in the Eastern Crisis: the concept of imperial causes. The demonstrative use of the concept was justified by cir-

cumstances somewhat analogous to those which had promoted its emergence. Interests of the Oversea Empire had become linked up with questions concerning the position of Great Britain in relation to other powers. They were seen to involve the vital interests of the nation, and the inference was that the nation had to become conscious of being an 'imperial' nation. And the term which could summarize this appeal most forcefully was no longer shunned. *Imperialism*, which in Disraeli's time had been only a term of abuse, was now proclaimed as the formula of useful and creditable political activity.

But the unfortunate pedigree of the language of imperialism was not easily forgotten, and the word offered a new challenge to conscientious Liberals. While their apprehensions grew, the interconnection between colonial interests and foreign relations, which overshadowed the concept of Imperial matters generally, revealed itself in the outbreak of the Boer War as an issue supremely susceptible to moral objections. The Transvaal was not a major power, but to all appearance a valiant small challenger of 'imperial' assumptions: 'Imperialism' could once more be identified with bullying. And to this interpretation another, still more fateful, was added. The controversy between Great Britain and the Transvaal originated in local interests of a very peculiar kind. Indirectly they were the outcome of the speculative interests that had fastened upon the Rand mines. These interests were felt to add a specially unsavoury flavour to the bullying of Imperialism. Had not national energies in South Africa been made subservient to the tyrannical interests of small but powerful groups of capitalists? On the basis of such conclusions the economic interpretation of Imperialism was reinforced. It was persuasively expounded by J. A. Hobson.¹

The linguistic history of 'Imperialism' is, then, full of paradox and contingency. The concept of Imperialism, which so readily appears to embody the condemnation of British history by the world outside, in fact originated from an uneasiness within the British conscience. And more broadly conceived the emergence of the concept manifests the intricacies of the task imposed on the British people to find a balanced attitude towards its own creation — the British Empire.

¹ I may refer to my article 'The Concept of Economic Imperialism' in *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, vol. II, pp. 1ff.

WILLIAM OF OCKHAM AS A POLITICAL THINKER

JOHN B. MORRALL

IN 1949, when the sexcentenary of his death was celebrated, attention was naturally concentrated upon the metaphysical, logical and scientific writings of William of Ockham. Opinion differed widely on their significance, but (in spite of some rather speculative attempts to link him with the latest fashion in philosophical reflection) his place in the history of philosophy was left very much where it had long been. He had been known chiefly as a logician, and he was celebrated as a logician. And in particular, his political writings were not unearthed for reconsideration.

These writings have always enjoyed a fate strangely different from his others. If they were studied at all, it was as a gesture of respect to one whose philosophical genius was unquestioned. The reason for this neglect is probably to be found in the accidents of manuscript transmission through the centuries. And in this connection it is relevant to observe a distinction between *personal* works (those in which Ockham speaks *propria persona*) and *impersonal* works (in which he puts his discussions into an enigmatic dialogue form). Most of the manuscripts containing the *personal* works were not known until the present century, so that Ockham's political ideas were represented only by the more baffling *impersonal* writings (of which the *Dialogus* is the best example). The character of these works was often of a kind which was bound to lead to misunderstanding and even dislike. Thus Thomasius, a leader of the Lutheran 'Scholastic' movement of the eighteenth century, speaks scathingly of Ockham as *adulator, homo ambidexter, neutralista, timidus*. Ockham was useful to Protestant polemists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an arsenal of anti-Papal weapons, and it is to this fact that we owe the only pre-twentieth century printed edition of his political works — Melchior Goldast's Frankfurt edition of 1614. After the middle of the seventeenth century there was no further need for Ockham even in this dubious capacity, and his political writings sank into an obscurity from which Goldast's typological blunders did nothing to save them. In the present century there have been several good editions of some of the smaller political treatises, while the Manchester University Press promises us a complete edition of the *Opera Politica* within the next few decades. The *Dialogus*, however, remains a problem which still awaits satisfactory elucidation and one of the

purposes of the present study is to suggest a possible change of approach to this problem.

The discovery during the present century of the hitherto unknown *personal* treatises (a discovery always to be associated with the name of the German scholar Richard Scholz) has inevitably brought a fresh outlook towards the *impersonal* works. It is still, however, far from obvious that the *personal* works can be accepted as a completely authoritative guide to the interpretation of the *impersonal* writings. Scholz himself seems to believe, indeed, that they can provide a key for this purpose and the same point is made more strongly by Georges de Lagarde in his still uncompleted work, *La Naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du moyenâge*.¹ Lagarde singles out Marsiglio of Padua and Ockham as the principal theoretical forerunners of the modern secular state and he believes that Ockham, contrary to the usual opinion, was the more influential of the two. According to Lagarde, Ockham's Nominalist philosophy demanded as its logical complement in the field of political theory a radical individualism. This 'political Nominalism' would be the theoretical counterpart of a practical phenomenon in the politics of fourteenth-century Europe — the growth of 'estates' with purely sectional interests, the disruptive force of the 'estates' preparing the way for the more profound disintegration of the sixteenth century.

I do not intend to ask here whether Lagarde is in fact right in the significance which he attaches to the régime of 'estates'. A more relevant inquiry, however, suggests itself. Is Lagarde right in assuming that Ockham's general philosophy was so intimately related to his views on social and political matters? And in this connection it may be observed that one could read the political works without realizing that their author had written anything on logic or metaphysics. Lagarde himself concedes that Ockham deliberately refrains from any discussion of the nature of law in his ethical writings, though he explains it by suggesting that Ockham wished to demonstrate by this omission the relativity, from the point of view of his philosophical position, of all forms of legal precept and sanction.²

There is, however, a more plausible explanation of the fact that Ockham wrote nothing on the nature of law and authority before his breach with Pope John XXII in 1328 and his flight to join the excommunicated Emperor Louis of Bavaria, under whose protection he spent the rest of his life. Church government and the relations between Church and State, which form the staple themes of his political writings, were conceived by Ockham as falling within the scope of deductions from theology and not from philosophy. It is im-

¹ St. Paul-Trois-Châteaux (France), 6 vols, 1934.

² *La Naissance*, vi, 93-6.

portant to emphasize this distinction, for in his Oxford philosophical works Ockham repeatedly insists that the difference between philosophy and theology is radical and total. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that at the opening of the great inquiry which constitutes the *Dialogus* he should take his stand on the following sources of appeal: ' . . . There are five kinds of truths, from which no Christian may dissent. The first class is of those truths which are stated in Holy Scripture, or which can be deduced therefrom by conclusive argument. The second is of those truths which have come down to us from the Apostles through the words of their successors or the writings of the faithful, although they may not be contained in Holy Scripture, nor deduced therefrom by conclusive argument. The third is of those truths which we find handed down to us by the faithful in trustworthy chronicles and histories. The fourth is of those truths which can be conclusively argued from those of the first and second kinds, or which, coming from the first or second kinds, can be corroborated by the third. The fifth is of those truths which supplement the truths revealed to the Apostles, truths which God has revealed to others and will reveal or impart in the future; which revelation or imparting has come and will come to the universal Church with complete certainty.'¹ In fairness it should be added that Ockham prefaces this paragraph with the words 'Tenent isti', so that even in this apparently clear-cut statement it is not absolutely certain that he is revealing his own mind. But as no rival definition is given in the course of the work the assumption may be risked that Ockham is outlining the necessary basis for any discussion on the nature and polity of the Church.

The approach of the first four methods is exclusively by way of an appeal to traditional authorities and not to abstract philosophical reasoning. It is true that he talks about deducing conclusions from the traditions mentioned 'by conclusive argument', and naturally in performing such deductions he would make use of his own logical principles, but that does not alter the fact that his basic terms of reference here are non-philosophical. The fifth category, the revelations from mystical experience, is even less calculated to give support to the view I am criticizing; for here we are completely outside the realm of Reason and are dealing with matters which are not subject to processes of human argumentation. The whole of this key passage on the sources of Christian knowledge is completely in harmony with the arguments of Ockham in other works against the possibility of a Natural Theology or of proving any Christian belief by Reason. The dichotomy which he makes between Faith and Reason in his metaphysical works is well known and it is not an improbable sup-

¹ *Dialogus*, Part I, Book 2, Chap. 5; Goldast: *Monarchia Imperii Romani* (Frankfurt, 1614), ii, 415-16.

position that the same dichotomy would be present in his political writings.

It is not, then, surprising that Ockham should have adopted a traditionalist and deductive approach to politics when we recall that his way into political theory was through the realm of ecclesiastical controversy. Originally he was not interested in questions either of Church or secular government, but he was led to examine them as a result of his becoming involved in the endless and tiresome controversy on the interpretation of the Franciscan Rule and of its chief precept, Evangelical poverty. For the first century of the Order's existence the Pope had been in theory the possessor of its temporal goods; the Franciscans merely held a permission from him to use such goods — they were granted the so-called *usus facti*. The Papacy had the worst of both worlds in this transaction, and in 1322 John XXII resolved to end the ambiguous situation by making the Franciscans responsible for their own property; they were to enjoy *usus uiris* as well as *usus facti*. The leaders of the Order, headed by the General, Michael of Cesena, at once objected, contending that not even the Papacy had power to alter the Rule. It was with this group of malcontents that Ockham came into contact during his and their enforced detention at Avignon in the years preceding 1328.

He had been summoned there from Oxford in 1324 to answer charges of quite a different kind; his philosophical theories had been denounced as heretical by the Chancellor of the University, John Lutterell, and finally fifty-one of his alleged propositions were condemned by a committee of theologians at Avignon in 1328. Ockham, as he himself says in his *Epistola ad Fratres Minores*¹ (an interesting *pièce justificative* written in 1334), had previously taken no interest whatever in the controversy on poverty. But his resentment at his unceremonious treatment by the Papal Curia led him to throw in his lot with the rebels and, after a dramatic escape with them from Avignon in 1328, he accompanied them in flight to Louis of Bavaria, then at Pisa during his abortive invasion of Italy. Louis himself was at loggerheads with John over the latter's refusal to recognize him as Emperor and as a counter-thrust he had declared John to be an unlawful Pope. One of the dissident Franciscans, Peter of Corvara, had been elevated by Louis to the Papal throne as Nicholas V and had crowned Louis as Emperor during the short-lived occupation of Rome by the Imperialist troops in 1327.

Louis's entourage was thus a natural magnet for every type of dissident from orthodoxy. Marsiglio of Padua and John of Jandun, authors of the already notorious *Defensor Pacis*, had been there since 1324. The arrival of Ockham and his circle added a further ingredient to the strange intellectual concoction which Louis was unconsciously

¹ *Epistola ad Fratres Minores*, edited by K. Brampton (Oxford, 1927), 1.

preparing. The common hatred of John XXII was the only link binding together the heterogeneous elements. Marsiglio and Ockham were, in fact, poles apart in positive political beliefs; the Italian thinker's desire to submerge all other entities and societies, including and especially the Church, in the omnicompetent framework of the State would be totally antipathetic to Ockham; it exhibited the same fault of overweening monist absolutism which Ockham regarded as the worst sin of John XXII.

Ockham's first political work, the *Opus Nonaginta Dierum*, devoted exclusively to stating the case of the Franciscan dissidents against John, was only the beginning of a long series of writings which discussed from every possible angle the nature of authority in Church and State. 'If you defend me with your sword', Ockham is reported to have said to Louis, 'I will defend you with my pen.' He certainly kept his promise; but the result is perhaps the most enigmatic *corpus* of writings in the whole field of political thought.

How is such a formidable mass to be dealt with? Discussion is apt to be based on the questions: What does Ockham himself mean? Which of the views which he outlines in the *impersonal* works does he himself support? Several attempts to answer these questions by 'reconstructions' of Ockham's true meaning have been made; none is fully convincing. Can it be that the questions themselves are the wrong ones? Would it not be better to ask instead: What sort of a political writer is Ockham?

The difficulties of those who have insisted on asking the first set of questions are best illustrated from the *Dialogus*. At the outset of this work (cast in the form of a conversation between a master and his pupil) the Disciple asks his instructor to refrain from indicating his own preferences among the various views which are to be discussed. The Master complies so faithfully with this request that the baffled modern reader of the *Dialogus* is tempted to echo Byron's comment in *Don Juan* on Coleridge's expositions of philosophy:

... Explaining metaphysics to the nation;
I wish he would explain his explanation.

Why did Ockham write so ambiguously? It has been suggested that he wished to conceal his real opinions as an insurance against the overthrow of his patron Louis or of an Imperial accommodation with the Pope. This, I think, is unlikely; for in the treatises of the 1340s (ten years later), when Ockham was in a much more precarious position (the Franciscan revolt had collapsed and there was no hope of permanent success for Louis), he speaks out in the most uncompromising terms against what he considers to be Papal abuses.

Another suggestion is that Ockham's training as a logician and dialectician made it second nature to him to treat the most trifling

details of his subject with the exhaustive care which was expected in the schools and which led to what are, for us, grave ambiguities of style. Yet the last thing of which the great Scholastics can justly be accused is ambiguity. Indeed, certain modern philosophers have criticized them for being over-precise. Ockham is no exception in his logical and metaphysical works. In some of them he follows the *Summa* method of which St Thomas Aquinas is the best-known expositor; objections are fully stated and refuted and a final personal decision is given. In others Ockham uses an equally clear method of straightforward exposition. Nowhere do we fail to discover what his own personal opinion is. The ambiguity which impresses the reader of the *Dialogus* does not, in fact, appear anywhere in Ockham's writings outside the political works. The obvious deduction is that, if the *Dialogus* is obscure, it is because Ockham deliberately wished it to be so. What would be his likely motives for this?

During the 1330s Ockham's views on the nature of Papal authority seem to have undergone radical change. He tells us in his *Epistola ad Fratres Minores* that he had originally not questioned the usual Papalist view of the omnicompetence of the Pope in matters of Church government.¹ His experiences at Avignon were disillusioning but the belief that John XXII, as a holder of heretical opinions, was not the rightful Pope, provided him with a possible means of avoiding an open breach with the theoretical standpoint of the Papalists. But by the time the *Dialogus* had been started (c. 1334), the situation had become graver. Louis's attempts to secure agreement with the Pope had come to nothing, and extremist voices among the Emperor's entourage were becoming stronger. There was talk of the right of the Emperor to summon a General Council to deal with a contumacious Pope; this move met with support from dissatisfied elements among the Avignon Cardinals themselves, headed by the practised intriguer Napoleone Orsini. It may be true, as Lagarde holds,² that the First Part of the *Dialogus* was commissioned as a work of research to prepare for the prosecution of the Pope in the coming Council; where it is difficult to follow Lagarde is in his assertion that the apparent impartiality of Ockham is a mere polemical device under cover of which he dexterously inserted the opinions which he wished the reader to carry away with him.³ If this interpretation is correct, it seems strange (and from the Emperor's point of view, inopportune) that Ockham should have devoted so much space to stating the possibility of the *fallibility* of a General Council, and this at a time when Louis's other propagandists were appealing to such a Council against the Pope.

¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

² Lagarde, *op. cit.*, iv, 41-2.

³ *Ibid.*, iv, 45-6.

The truth, it seems, may be more complex than Lagarde allows. Ockham in the First Part of the *Dialogus* is a polemist; but he is also a genuinely perplexed mind — a theological Hamlet. Like Hamlet, his main idea is a negative one — to destroy an unjust authority; Avignon is his Claudius. But of what is to replace Avignon he has no conception, although he is plainly struggling to find one. His method is to set down every possible view on the problems which agitated his mind. For this purpose the obvious medium was the technique of the 'disputation', which had reached a high pitch of development in the Oxford schools of the fourteenth century.

When the *Dialogus* is considered in this light, it is clear that one risks disappointment if one searches for consistency of purpose or for statements of personal conviction. The significance of the work is rather that it presents the whole picture of medieval thinking on Church and State, formulated by Ockham as he struggles to find his intellectual bearings. And that there are dangers in attempting to apply more positive standards than this to the *Dialogus* is shown by the strange but commonly accepted idea from the fifteenth to the twentieth century that Ockham is one of the originators of Conciliar supremacy over the Pope. Yet outside the *Dialogus* there is not a single passage in the known works of Ockham in which the question is even discussed, while in the *Dialogus* itself¹ the view that the Council is superior is merely one among several rival arguments put forward by the Magister. Why should we assume that this view expresses Ockham's personal opinion any more than the others? It is obvious that the Conciliar protagonists of the fifteenth century would and did see the advantage of enlisting so powerful an authority on their side by interpreting the text in this way, but the unfortunate fact is that the extremist colouring which they and the later Protestant controversialists insisted on giving to Ockham's hesitations still tends to be accepted as his genuine opinion.

I suggest, then, that Ockham is not here trying to write an original piece of political reasoning (even if he may have been given instructions to do so), but that he is compiling the first encyclopaedia of political theory, writing in the tradition of the great medieval encyclopaedists like St Isidore and Vincent of Beauvais. He is not trying to prove anything; instead he is stating the case for every possible view on every possible question with such thoroughness that he sometimes surrenders to the temptation of discussing for the sake of discussion. We would do well to bear in mind the *caveat* of Professor E. F. Jacob, in considering the relation of the two classes of Ockham's works: '... he does not say that his *conclusions* would be found in the larger work; he merely observes that there the matters

¹ *Dialogus*, Part I, Book 6, Chaps. 54-5; Goldast, op. cit., ii, 602ff.

would be found discussed with care and elaboration (*exquisite*).¹ The best example of this fondness of Ockham for argument is in the following curious exchange between Master and Disciple, quoted here as an illustration of the technique followed throughout the *Dialogus*:

DISCIPLE I want you to tell me whether anyone is of the opinion that the whole body of Christians can be defiled with heretical perversions.

MASTER The Jews, Saracens and Pagans are convinced that the Christian Faith is erroneous.

DISCIPLE I'm not referring to them, but to Christians, including heretics.

MASTER I do not know any Christian who would hold such a view.

DISCIPLE Even if you don't know that any Christian holds the view, will you, for the purposes of argument, try to find some reasons in defence of this theory?

MASTER No reason except a sophistical one can be put forward to solve a false problem.

DISCIPLE I agree (*Concedo*) that a sophistical reason cannot really provide justification for the opinion we are discussing; on the other hand cogent and weighty arguments are often put forward in explanation of things which are false. So will you try to find some such reasons?²

And of course the Master goes on to find six reasons, which he states at length. The atmosphere is that of a disputation ceremony at a medieval university, with an old hand showing all the ingenuity he can muster. But it is a game played for the sake of the game and not for a decision.

The Third Part of the *Dialogus* stands somewhat apart from the rest of the work and was in fact written later, in 1338. The date is of importance, for it demonstrates once again that Ockham was actuated to write by the developing pressure of topical events. Much had happened since 1334. John XXII had died in the very year that the First Part of the *Dialogus* was written, but his death had brought peace no nearer. The General Council project had collapsed, and the new Pope, Benedict XII, was as intransigent as the old. 1338 saw Louis once more prepared for a fight to a finish, having formed a coalition with Edward III of England against France and the allegedly French-dominated Pope. This time Louis based his opposition to Avignon on the assertion of the imprescriptible rights

¹ *Essays in the Conciliar Epoch* (Manchester, 1943), 87. Professor Jacob is referring to the following sentence from the *De Imperatorum et Pontificum Potestate* (written in 1346): 'Sane quae in hoc compendio perstringuntur, in aliis operibus, praesertim in quodam Dialogo quem incipi, qui habuerit, discussa inveniet exquisite.' (Scholz, *Unbekannte kirchenpolitische Streitschriften aus der Zeit Ludwigs des Bayern*, 455).

² *Dialogus*, Part I, Book 6, Chap. 35; Goldast, op. cit., ii, 505.

of the German kingdom and Empire, rights which the Electoral princes were emphasizing from their own point of view at the same time in the famous assembly at Rhens. Once more Ockham is given a polemical assignment: he must write a treatise *De Potestate et Iuribus Imperii Romani*; and once more he carries it out in his own characteristic fashion. Louis seems to have been pleased with the result for he ordered a copy to be sent to Albert of Austria in 1340; but this merely proves, if proof were needed, that Louis was no intellectual. If he had been, he would have found Ockham's effort to be, in part, alarming reading; it is true that Ockham stated the case for German rights as painstakingly as he stated the case against them; but he also showed considerable dependence on the 'Italian' tradition inherent in Civil Law and its interpretation. The sympathetic consideration for the idea that the *populus Romanus* remained the true fount of Imperial authority almost suggests that Ockham had some contact with the growing renaissance of Republican separatism in Italy and particularly in Rome, where Rienzi was to make his dramatic bid for power in the following decade. This isolated example may serve to show that Ockham is by no means the devoted propagandist for Louis that some modern writers would have us believe.

The most permanent element which emerges from the Third Part of the *Dialogus* and its companion piece, *Octo Quaestiones de Potestate Papae* (written about the same time) is the emphasis on the 'rights' and 'liberties' of each member of the ecclesiastical and secular hierarchy. Ockham did not of course originate this idea; it was an expression of the medieval conception that the law of a community bound together ruler and subject in an association which could not be modified without the consent of both parties. Where Ockham may be said to be a pioneer is in applying this originally Germanic and feudal conception to the government of the Church itself.

He does so in the largest of his *personal* works, the *Breviloquium* (1337).¹ Throughout this work he is concerned to contest the completeness of Papal authority over spiritual and temporal matters. The exaggerated claims of the Papalists are described as being contrary to 'the evangelical law of liberty'.² What is this 'evangelical law of liberty'? It is a grave mistake to read Lutheran conceptions back into Ockham; what he seems to be upholding is the freedom of the Christian from legislative burdens over and above the requirements of the Divine law of revelation. It is plainly the Canonist supporters of Papal claims whom he regards as the chief menace, and, as Dr. Walter Ullmann has recently shown,³ the Canon Law of the time claimed for the Pope prerogatives which almost every Catholic

¹ Edited by L. Baudry (Paris, 1937). ² *Breviloquium*, II, 3. Baudry, op. cit., 19.

³ *Medieval Papalism* (London, 1950).

theologian of the twentieth century would regard as excessive. If the Pope attempts to impose such burdens 'his action is not legally valid but is rendered null by the Divine law itself'.¹ The Pope and the Christian community are related to each other in quasi-feudal fashion and, if the Pope oversteps the rightful limits of the authority assigned to him, his subjects, just like the vassals of a secular prince, have the right to resist him.

The theory of authority on which Ockham bases his position is governed by a distinction between two forms of authority which he sets in contrast. The first type is an authority based on personal possession; the second is an authority based on an official status. It is the difference between an owner of property and an agent who may be delegated to administer it. Ockham describes this distinction as being one between *dominium* and *potestas*, terminology of which he was not the inventor. In fact, he is merely re-emphasizing the traditional distinction between office and property which was a medieval commonplace. It was, however, a commonplace which Ockham believed to be put in danger by the policy of the Papacy, which was tending to depreciate the delegated and thereby limited character of its own position in favour of a proprietorial conception of its prerogatives. In attacking the Papal claim to *plenitudo potestatis* Ockham is constantly appealing to the witness of past authorities, including Popes themselves and there can be no doubt that he regards himself as being conservative on this issue.

The *Breviloquium* and the other *personal* writings give, then, a clearer picture of Ockham's own standpoint than does the *Dialogus*; but they hardly prove that that standpoint was radical or revolutionary. That, perhaps, may be the answer to the question: What sort of a political writer is Ockham? The answer, if my argument has been correct, is that Ockham the political theorist is not of the original stature of Ockham the metaphysician and logician.

Why, then, should his political works be studied at all? If there is so little originality in them, is the inevitable labour worth while? In defence, it can be pointed out that it is not the original pioneers of thought who are most useful in enabling the student to appreciate the mental climate of a given age; in this task, their very originality is a drawback. On the other hand, it is here that the more derivative mind comes into its own, for it is able to give a fairer and more impersonal account of what is going on round it. Ockham the political thinker falls into this second category. His own contribution cannot claim to be epoch-making, but as a reporter and expositer of current views he cannot be surpassed for the thoroughness and (all things considered) the objectivity with which he presents every shade of contemporary opinion.

¹ *Breviloquium*, II, 4. Baudry, op. cit., 21.

BACON AND PARACELSUS

HAROLD FISCH

THE paradox of our civilization is that the forces which threaten us are forces which we have ourselves released, but which have now passed beyond our control. We are faced, for example, with a social and industrial problem which apparently defies human ingenuity, though it has been brought about by human ingenuity. Many thinkers have sought elaborate explanations of this 'demonic' element which has entered into the economic enterprise of the last two or three hundred years, but the simplest explanation was suggested by Matthew Arnold when he warned his contemporaries against faith in machinery and wealth as 'precious ends in themselves'. Indeed, the human failure we are concerned with here appears whenever any desirable human objective is regarded as having an absolute value in itself. The immediate crisis today is, however, neither cultural nor economic, but simply physical. It is the threat which follows from the manufacture of weapons of war which may prove to be uncontrollable. Scientific progress has for long been regarded as a 'precious end in itself' and it has in consequence acquired a 'demonic' character.

It will be argued, of course, that the scientist's intentions have rarely been diabolical. But that is also true very often of soldiers fighting for some quite diabolical cause. Their avowals of innocence are genuine enough but, nevertheless, the cause unconsciously determines their actions and carries them along with it. The same is true of the ordinary working scientist, who is often unaware, that his activity has any moral implications, diabolical or otherwise.

The moral bases of modern science were fashioned in the seventeenth century by men like Bacon and Hobbes. These men were not scientists in the technical sense and neither of them made any important discovery, but it was they who captured the 'New Philosophy', as it was then called, and provided it with a Faith and a philosophy. And the philosophy they provided held quite frankly as its main ideal the limitless expansion of human power. That is why it may be called diabolical. Bacon spoke of his aim as being, 'the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible', and Hobbes declared, even more bluntly, 'the end of Knowledge is Power'. One of the greatest sources of confusion which Bacon condemns in the *Novum Organum* is 'the corruption of philosophy by superstition and an admixture of theology'. This, he says elsewhere, was the crime of the Kabbalists and Alchemists. For Bacon, the

world must be divided into two halves, the natural and the supernatural. Divinity is concerned exclusively with the supernatural. Like Descartes, Bacon made a clean cut. He did not abolish Divinity: on the contrary, he gave it a prominent place in the Second Book of the *Advancement of Learning*; but he severed it completely from the rest of our experience. From the 'unwholesome mixture of things human and divine there arises', he declared, 'not only a fantastic philosophy but also an heretical religion'. By this severance, he insulated his system of Natural Philosophy from contact with Religion, and he believed (or pretended to believe) that, by so doing, he was defending Religion itself from heresy. This dissociation was, of course, only the first stage; Hobbes simplified the whole thing by omitting Theology entirely from his philosophical programme. Religion — the Religion of the State — is to be 'swallowed whole' for no better reason, apparently, than that it is politically expedient to do so. Ultimately, these teachings prevailed in more or less extreme forms: the *Royal Society*, as established in 1662, was a fundamentally Baconian institution, and Locke inherited the tradition of Bacon.

It is, nevertheless, important to recognize that this was not the only tradition available to the working scientist of the seventeenth century. There existed an older tradition which even the plausibility of Bacon and his followers did not destroy: I mean the philosophy of the Paracelsian school. The thinkers of this school had as their object, no less than Bacon, the discovery of scientific law and 'the relief of man's estate'. In fact, Paracelsus may be said to have initiated the modern sciences of chemistry and medicine by substituting reliance upon experiment for the blind acceptance of authority. But they were all sustained by an ideal taught by Paracelsus with eloquent reiteration: 'So God is one in everything, the first and last matter of all things.' These men, using sometimes the more naïve methods of alchemy, aimed primarily at seeking the traces of the Creator in His Creation. In the purest form of the tradition, the beginning and end of knowledge was not power, but 'the fear of God'.

The alchemists have fared badly in literature: from Ben Jonson onwards, we find them held up for ridicule. But the absurdities of alchemy were not of its essence. They arose because so many of the adepts had the faith of Paracelsus and van Helmont without their practical ability or understanding of scientific method. They knew that Nature was a miracle but they did not know what kind of a miracle it was. And it is unfortunate that satire should have obscured the fact that many of the alchemists were physicians and chemists of a fertile and practical genius. The greatest chemist and, in some ways, the most distinguished scientist of the seventeenth century, Robert Boyle, called himself a 'sceptical chymist'. He was, that is to say, an alchemist who had abandoned the wilder method of the enthusiasts

(the search for the Philosopher's Stone and all the other practices that we associate with Sir Epicure Mammon), but he retained, nevertheless, the theoretic foundations and the ideals of the Hermetic philosophy.

What then were the essentials of this tradition? The first is perhaps best defined by Paracelsus in his *Short Catechism of Alchemy*:

- Q.* What is the chief study of a Philosopher?
- A.* It is the investigation of the Operations of Nature.
- Q.* What is the end of Nature?
- A.* God, Who is also its beginning.
- Q.* Whence are all things derived?
- A.* From one and indivisible Nature.

Nature is a unity, and it is a unity because God is its beginning and its end. This belief which came to Paracelsus from Platonism, neo-Platonism and, particularly from the Jewish *Kabbalah* — for he like Boyle, was a good hebraist — may be said to be diametrically opposed to the teachings of Bacon. To Bacon, the study of Nature is man-centred, leading to the exclusive and final authority of the human will; to Paracelsus, it is God-centred, offering as its final reward an increased knowledge of the nature of God.

From the belief that natural philosophy was organically related to theology, certain conclusions followed. In the first place, it meant that the physical and spiritual orders were not, as Bacon thought, separate. To Paracelsus, each natural thing, whether animate or inanimate, had its indwelling supernatural agent or *Archeus*. But definitions varied: other Hermetic philosophers spoke of the 'quintessence', a mysterious compound bringing into all material things an immaterial life and energy. Many came to think that these immaterial forces could be controlled or manipulated by the alchemist; hence the association between alchemy and magic. But that was merely an eccentric development. Essentially, the universe of man and nature was seen to be constantly lit up by flashes of divinity. No one can read the tracts of these adepts without sensing the spiritual rapture, the excitement and awe which they brought to their contemplation of all physical things, however insignificant: 'A Stone is a part of the Great World', writes the younger van Helmont, '... Now the Spirit of the Great World, it dwells and rules in this Stone.' And Paracelsus, discussing the mystical properties of the air we breathe, says: 'None can deny that the air gives life to all corporeal and substantial things which are born and generated from the earth. But as to what and of what kind the life of each particular thing is, it should be known that the life of things is none other than a spiritual essence, an invisible and impalpable thing, a spirit and a spiritual thing.' Like Blake, Paracelsus is capable of

seeing 'a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower'. Indeed, at this level there is much common ground between poetry and science. Thomas and Henry Vaughan, the one an alchemist, the other a metaphysical poet, both shared the same ideal vision of the universe.

'Very well', the Baconian might say; 'but where does this get you? It may be imaginatively interesting, but surely such ideals cannot provide the sort of drive necessary for real scientific progress. From this "unwholesome mixture" there can arise only obscurantism, not science.' Now, that this is simply not historically correct is to be observed when one considers the career of Robert Boyle and the notable results which he achieved in so many fields. As an experimental scientist of the 'Invisible College' (later, the *Royal Society*), he regarded himself as a follower of Bacon's empirical method, but it did not seem to him to be necessary to divide the spiritual and the physical in the manner of Bacon and Descartes. He argued that a spiritual substance enters into the composition of man in spite of what the *Epicureans* — meaning Hobbes — believed. The true scientist, he held, ought not to disregard the immaterial forces present in Nature: on the contrary, it was the glory of the true scientist that, as his knowledge of the universe increased, so he became more and more aware of the transcendent principle beyond. Like Thomas Vaughan, he spoke of the World as a Temple and of the Natural Philosopher as a Priest whose function it was to 'offer up for the Creatures the Sacrifice of Praise to the Creator'. To study the Creation but ignore the Creator was not only supremely blasphemous; it was also bad science, a view held also by such men as Thomas Browne and Henry More.

The differences between the Baconian and the Paracelsian approach to Nature can be stated in a variety of ways. In the first place, the discovery of natural law could not be regarded by the school of Paracelsus as an end in itself. They would seek to extend it by means of the principle of analogy. Once it is seen that the universe of Man and Nature share a common spiritual principle, it becomes possible to see significant parallels between events in the Macrocosm, or greater world, and events in the Microcosm, or little world. 'Earth also is made of that which is not in itself, and so likewise is Man,' declares Paracelsus. Thus, the alchemists frequently employed the language of chemical operations as a kind of parable for describing spiritual states. Mercury stands for Spirit, Sulphur for Soul, Salt for Body and so on. It was mainly in the what was called the 'transmutation of metals' that they saw this law of analogy operating; they observed that it was possible for metals to be calcined or 'mortified', as they said, and subsequently reconstituted by the chemist to their original state. In this process,

they found a potent symbol of the experience of sin and regeneration. Sometimes, in their discussion of these processes, fantasy took the place of fact; but at the centre of their speculations was a core of genuine scientific observation and observation which contained, moreover, a symbolism of permanent religious significance.

It follows that the true and pious naturalist will need to bring to his observation of Nature something more than the faculty of Reason and unassisted sense-experience. Reason operates, as it were, in a medium of Faith and is merely one of the avenues by which we approach truth. Nature, says Boyle, 'is God's epistle to Mankind' and, he adds, it is 'written in mathematical letters'. The language of Nature is mathematical but the statement it makes is metaphysical. It is a revelation parallel to the Scriptures. True understanding thus requires a complex and enlightened sensibility and even then the whole truth cannot be discovered. This attitude imports into Boyle's speculations a note of humility which is absent from Bacon's writings. At the bottom of things, he finds a mystery. Gravitation, for instance, cannot finally be explained on mechanical principles. He accepted the discoveries of his fellow workers and their more reasonable hypotheses but he never felt that he had reached the final truth. It is this sort of attitude perhaps which may recommend Boyle in his Essays on Natural Philosophy to our own generation. In our own generation, the mechanical laws of Newton and the quantitative picture of the universe supplied by Descartes have revealed their inadequacy. We have now gone as far as Boyle did from the materialism of Hobbes, though, of course, not in quite the same direction. Nevertheless, the new perspective which our different standpoint gives us should make it possible for us to appreciate the enlightened quality of Boyle's mind or that of another pious naturalist, Henry More, who declared that 'there is no Phaenomenon in Nature purely mechanical'.

In Bacon's work, and more particularly in that of his spiritual successor, Hobbes, we find an arrogant assertion of the unlimited power of human reason. Hobbes, in fact, as one critic¹ has recently pointed out, comes near to ascribing to Reason the very Creation of the Universe. He would have liked to see all our knowledge of man and nature placed on the same footing of pure rationalism as geometry. And he places a similar reliance on sense-experience: 'There is no other act of man's mind, that I can remember, naturally planted in him, so, as to need no other thing, to the exercise of it, but to be born a man, and to live with the use of his five Senses.' But there is a significant difference here between this attitude and that of Bacon and Descartes, for they, at least, had preserved part of their sensibilities from the encroachments of Reason. We possess,

¹ D. G. JAMES: *The Life of Reason* (1949).

according to them, an irrational layer of experience, by which we apprehend things Divine. Hobbes, however, is a pure positivist. With him there is no department of life for which Reason and Sense-experience cannot legislate. And this doctrine, expressed with more tact and moderation, becomes later on the standpoint of Locke as well. For Locke, all knowledge must be reduced to what he calls 'clear and distinct ideas' and these ideas can only be arrived at by means of Sensation and Reflection.

The world as it appeared for Bacon and his followers had severe limitations. It excluded not only Faith but poetry as well. In the 'rigourous search of Truth', according to Hobbes, metaphors must be excluded 'seeing they openly profess deceipt' and for Locke, too, 'the arts of fallacy' (as he calls poetry and eloquence) are to be tolerated only as one tolerates the fair sex: that is, they are never to be taken seriously. In his treatise on Education, he advises parents what to do if they find that a child has a gift for poetry. At all costs, let them prevent it from being developed and rather 'labour to have it stifled and suppressed as much as may be'.

Such an attitude produced a characteristic reaction. When the Age of Reason had done its worst, Blake appeared and asserted a similar autonomy for the Imagination. For him, the scientific world-picture was the shadow, and the imaginative one was the substance. To him, the laws constructed by Newton were not merely inadequate as a representation of reality: they were a diabolical fallacy. On being asked, 'When the sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire, somewhat like a guinea?', Blake answered: 'I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty'. For Boyle, Thomas Browne and Paracelsus a true vision of the world was one which took account of both these views.

The essential sanity and balance of the Neo-hermetic school of scientists is perhaps best shown by their readiness to include Final causes in their account of natural phenomena. The sun shines because hydrogen is being converted into helium by nuclear fission — that is the answer according to Second causes. It also shines, Boyle and his fellows do not forget, in order to declare the glory of the Lord and to gladden and nourish the world we live in. But the Divine plan is revealed in things both small and great. 'There is incomparably more art', Boyle declares, 'in the structure of a dog's foot, than in that of the famous clock at Strassburg.' And from a consideration of the function of each organ of an animal the scientist of the Hermetic tradition naturally proceeds to 'the cosmical, and therefore primary and over-ruling ends, that may have been designed by nature in the construction of the whole animal'. Into the discussion of Final causes, there also enter aesthetic considerations.

Certain things exist in the natural world because they are beautiful: that is how we must account for the 'melodious music of singing birds' Boyle tells us, or 'the feathers that make up the peacock's train'. Nature reveals not only a divine wisdom but also a divine artistry.

Now, it was on this question of Final causes that Boyle following Ralph Cudworth came into sharp conflict with the Cartesians. To Descartes, the scientist had done his job when he had described the phenomena before him in terms of local motion — that is to say, Second causes. Final causes there may be, but they are altogether too sublime for our normal concerns. They belong to Faith, not Physics. Boyle would agree that the scientist had not discharged his obligations until he had given the fullest possible account of the material causes of things, until he had discovered everything that it was possible to know about how the wheels go round, but on some questions the only important reflections will be 'physico-theological' ones, as he calls them — explanations that are concerned with the purposes of Providence. And he held it to be the office of the Natural Philosopher to give an account of the universe as a purposeful and meaningful system as far as its meaning and purposes could be discerned.

On Final causes, Bacon remarks, that they are 'hindrances to stay and slug the ship from further sailing'. But where was this ship of his bound? If to Divinity, 'the Sabbath and port of all men's labours and peregrinations' as he calls it elsewhere, then clearly, they are not a hindrance at all but an important and even indispensable resource. They enable the scientist to say, 'I will praise thee, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Bacon was close enough to the tradition of Paracelsus to feel the force of this point of view. In considering the nature of things, it was his aim that 'God might have the more glory in the workmanship of them'. But in departing from that tradition he gave to the scientists of his day the less subtle aim of exerting power over Nature as 'a precious end in itself'. And it is into the vacuum thus created that the demon enters. No doubt it is true that the language and the doctrines of the school of Paracelsus are remote from anything that could be accepted now, but it is by no means far fetched to see in them an intimation of a scientific philosophy more profound than the simple-minded Baconian faith in power. If the Hermetic school serves no other purpose, at least it reminds us that the Baconian tradition is not the only one, and that it suffers from grave defects.

BOOK REVIEWS

JANKO LAVRIN: Ibsen. *Methuen*, 12s. 6d.

Professor Lavrin's sub-title, 'An Approach', modest in its implications, might well be changed into 'A Guidebook'; for here, in fourteen short chapters and a conclusion, covering in all only 135 pages, is a review of Ibsen's dramatic works, preceded by a biographical sketch of the great man's life and character. Not that the author makes use of a 'Baedeker' system of stars in singling out certain plays for special praise. With few exceptions he is content to let the analyses of the works, with their respective emphasis on themes, argue the case for Ibsen's greatness, whilst connecting together certain relevant factors in the author's own psychological development with the play under discussion.

Indeed, his own chapter-headings are sometimes melodramatic where the chapters themselves are not, and these titles — 'The Gyntish self', 'The Insecurity of Conscience', and so on — may uneasily recall, to a devotee of Stella Gibbons's satire, the efforts of Mr Mybug, Flora Poste's follower in *Cold Comfort Farm*, and author of 'Pard-spirit; a study of Branwell Brontë'. Professor Lavrin's *matter* is, however, carefully and conscientiously presented. It is a considerable achievement to have put into these 130 odd pages so much of Ibsen's ideas and ideals; and in the increasing English literature concerning the Norwegian dramatist this work will surely serve a particularly useful purpose, in introducing Ibsen to the English university student of European literature, that is, to the student who is *not* studying Scandinavian letters in and for themselves.

Professor Lavrin does not in any way attempt to take up controversial points of Ibsen-scholarship, and even though one bears in mind the limiting factors of space and paper shortage, one may well be somewhat taken aback by a statement such as the following about *The Wild Duck* (p. 93): 'In no other work of his are all the ingredients, down to the smallest details, more closely and as it were organically interwoven than they are here'. Not a hint that Ibsen's 'symbolism' in the use of the wild duck has been acclaimed by some critics as masterly, whilst others have regarded the bird in the Ekdals' attic as anything but an 'organic' part of the play. To deal with this and similar points a rather more extensive bibliography and perhaps a few footnotes might have been serviceable.

Again, Emilie Bardach's role in the genesis of *The Master Builder* and her possible effect on Ibsen's marriage are discussed (pp. 114-15), but no mention is made of Laura Kieler's significance in Ibsen's spiritual crisis at that time and in the conception of Hilda Wangel; nor is there any reference to Ibsen's own repudiation of the idea of a divorce from his wife (see Bergliot Ibsen's *De Tre*, Oslo, 1948, p. 241). And I find it difficult to agree with Professor Lavrin's judgment that Hilda Wangel has Rebecca West's vitality without her hardness. Surely this hardness is an essential feature of Hilda, the hardness of the very young and single-minded who cannot tolerate that their romantic and arrogant dreams be shattered?

These, however, are minor points. More serious is the rather pedestrian impression left by this study of Ibsen's works and personality. The poetry and the overtones of the dramas, the fire and the trembling sensitiveness of their creator are indicated as facts, but somehow fail to convince. Professor Lavrin is, probably, like many psychologists, more interested in the youth of his subject than in his later reactions. He takes up, for instance, the interesting problem of Ibsen's illegitimate child and the 'guilt-complex' engendered by it in Ibsen's work, commenting on the number of bastards in the dramas. But what is the connection between these facts and the curious one that many of Ibsen's heroes have (like the dramatist himself) at most one child, and are frequently childless,

though married. And this in an age of Victorian fertility and enormous families! Yet, whatever Ibsen lacked, it was not vitality. When J. Paulsen (whom Lavrin mistakenly quotes as a personal friend of the dramatist), after exploiting his personal contacts with the Ibsen family, had published his garbled accounts of their home life, and then had the impertinence to address a personal letter to the man he had maligned, Ibsen replied by sending him a postcard. This — open to all to read — was addressed care of the Scandinavian Club in Rome, and ran: 'Skurk [Villain]. [Signed] Henrik Ibsen'. Such was the Grand Old Man in action. Irritating, yes. Disagreeable, often. But dull, never.

BRITA MORTENSEN

H. T. Morse (Ed.): *General Education In Transition*. *University of Minnesota Press*.

The Idea and Practice of General Education, an Account of the College of the University of Chicago, by Present and Former Members of the Faculty. *University of Chicago Press*.

In order to appreciate these two books on general education in the U.S.A. the English reader must bear in mind that they are discussing the education of students between sixteen and twenty years of age. They therefore cut across the divisions of the English educational system, and are of special interest not only to university teachers, but to those responsible for VIII form courses in grammar schools. The scope of both books is broadly the same, but the approach is different. *General Education in Transition* is a collection of papers recording lectures and discussions at a conference on this subject at Minnesota. *The Idea and Practice of General Education*, on the other hand, is an account of the academic programme of general education at the College of the University of Chicago after 'nearly two decades of debate and development'. It is the better of the two volumes.

General Education in Transition is thus rather less 'down to earth' than the Chicago study. It opens with a section devoted to current trends in general education, consisting of seven papers, rather uneven in quality. There is a sound, though not very stimulating contribution from Earl J. McGrath on 'The Need for Experiment'. It is followed by one by Malcolm S. Maclean on the 'General College' which will irritate the more thoughtful English student of education. Here we are told of a 'united search into people, what they are, how they grow and learn, why they behave as they do, in order that we find out what and how to teach them in general education'. It is, of course, true that such research might tell us *how* to teach people, but it cannot possibly tell us *what* to teach them in general education for this is surely an inference not from people as they are, but from aims and ideals, from a philosophical idea of what they *ought* to be. 'The very essence of general education' says Dr Maclean, 'lies in the basic wants of man'. This view is widely held, implicitly more than explicitly among English educationists — we hear, for instance, of 'child-centred education' — a concept analogous to 'seed-centred gardening'. Its necessary corollary is a belief that psychological research by itself can solve all the problems of education, and it is open to serious criticism, for it inevitably leads to a fatal vagueness about the purposes of education. Thus Dr Maclean's paper abounds in the use of question-begging terms — he speaks of 'healthy' personalities, of 'sound' families, of 'rich' friendships, and of 'good' jobs. Later, he argues that 'the swift deterioration . . . of educated American men overseas, as their value attachments disintegrated and they took refuge . . . in looting, rape, etc.' is an instance of the failure of general education. This may be so, but Dr Maclean's comment is also an instance of the ambiguities in the term 'general education' and, perhaps, of how much more Americans expect of formal education than we do. In general,

this paper prompts the reflection that the first condition of useful thinking about general education is that the specialist should be acutely aware of the limits of his specialism.

By contrast, the last three papers in this section are profound, stimulating, and eminently readable, especially that of Clarence H. Faust, who also contributes to the Chicago volume. It would be difficult to improve upon his short statement of the nature and purposes of general education, and it may be strongly commended to English readers. The last paper, on 'General Education and Specialism in British Universities', is a fair survey based on personal enquiry by the author. No reference, however, is made to the attempt of some universities to develop the principle underlying Oxford Classical 'Greats', and to set up joint honours schools of Philosophy and one other subject, such as English Literature, Economics, or Psychology — there are four such honours schools at Bristol. The new regulations at the London School of Economics for the Bachelor's degree might also be mentioned as a contribution to general education. Finally, Stoke on Trent does not appear to have been visited.

Section II deals with studies within the specialisms — social sciences, humanities, fine arts, science, and so on — and considers their several contributions to general education. These also vary in quality: that on 'Communication' — the use of language — raises many interesting problems, but one on the 'Personal Adjustment Area' will repel many readers with its jargon. Considered as a whole, this section illustrates the many different notions of 'general education' now prevalent.

Section III concludes the book with two long general papers, which contain much that will stimulate and interest the reader. Besides many shrewd practical observations, the papers in this section face the central problem of the choice between 'student-oriented or subject-oriented approaches in curriculum building', and there is a useful discussion of some of the philosophical points involved in this.

The Idea and Practice of General Education opens with an admirable statement of the 'Problem of General Education' by Dr. Faust, and a long historical account of the development of general education at the Chicago College — a section which answers many of the English reader's queries regarding the age and kind of student for whom the courses are intended, and which also shows vividly the point of view of the sectional academic interests whom the College had to convince. There follows Part II on 'Curriculum' where all the main academic disciplines discuss their own contributions to general education. This section is far better, and more even in quality than the corresponding section in *General Education in Transition*. Perhaps this is because, in Chicago, the contributors are recording what has been tried and found to work in practice. It also seems that the calibre of the contributors is higher, and that they are clear and agreed about what constitutes 'general education'. In their view, it consists of an introduction to the main fields of knowledge, or 'modes of experience', and its basis is therefore a philosophical examination of the nature of different kinds of knowledge, and of the methods of study appropriate to each. This is an important, though not original conception, and its practical application, which is the main theme of the book, is of interest to all educationists.

It is difficult to single out one paper rather than another in this section, but that on the Social Sciences is, perhaps, particularly stimulating, and there is a chapter on 'Integration' which contains a useful discussion of whether history or philosophy should be the basis of the whole course. Considered as a whole, these contributions bring out clearly the essential point that a course to introduce a student to a mode of knowledge as a part of his general education must differ radically from a course to prepare a student as a specialist in the same mode of knowledge. How far these courses succeed in their purpose it is hard for the

reader to judge, but at least they have tried. Here in England, the discussions about excessive and premature specialization, although loquacious, hardly ever appreciate this elementary but quite fundamental point. Amongst other things, it is the difference between a course which is complete in itself, and one which is not.

Finally, in Part III, there is a discussion of 'Methods of Teaching, Examining and Advising'. This is probably the part least applicable to English education, though it is an interesting account of American methods. Examination techniques in particular, are unlikely to commend themselves to us, for there seems to have been an 'all-out' effort to secure standardized marking, and this has led to a great distaste for the 'essay-type' examination. The result is that many subjects, such as moral and political philosophy, which, one would have thought, could only be examined by essay questions, are, in Chicago, tested by new, and somewhat dubious techniques. Specimen examination papers are quoted at the end, and the whole volume is fully documented with lists of texts studied, time allotted, and other details showing the kind of proficiency expected.

These volumes will naturally interest the student of the United States, for they will inform him of a vigorous intellectual discussion of what is there a living and practical issue. They also have much to offer the English educationist concerned primarily, or even solely, with educational problems in England. From such a reader, a different approach is required, for the study of the thought of another country demands something of the same imaginative effort as the study of the thought of another age: it is essential to understand the context in which it is written and to which it refers. There are historical and social reasons for the American faith in formal education — for the fact that what we leave to family upbringing and national tradition, are all problems of school, college and university education to them. Parts — small parts — of the Minnesota volume will seem irritating and even absurd to the English reader — for instance, plans of courses in 'vocational, personal and family life orientation', and the existence of a chair of 'Effective Living'. But we shall lose much if we ignore the other, and in these volumes, much larger side of the picture — the stimulating and often profound thinking about the academic and intellectual part of general education. The reader with sympathetic understanding will find that he has much to learn from the United States, and that, in these two books, there is much which might be applied with profit in England.

W. H. BURSTON

THEODORE SHABAD: *Geography of the U.S.S.R.* Oxford University Press: London, Geoffrey Cumberlege.

This excellent regional survey is primarily, as the author explains, a political and economic one, and in the U.S.S.R. these two aspects of geography more nearly merge than in other countries and semi-continents where administrative divisions depend much more on history and less on planned industrial and demographic revolution. Four-fifths of the book consists therefore of a descriptive and mainly economic gazetteer, classified according to administrative regions, and this portion is of more originality and value than the general introduction, except where the latter's sections on toponymy and administrative territorial divisions are concerned. In these sections Soviet practices are described in a few pages more lucidly and sufficiently than in any other source known to the reviewer. But too little prominence seems to be given in the lay-out of this portion of the book to the zonal differentiation of the Soviet Union according to soil, climate and flora. This has been the essential basis of the historical geography of Northern Eurasia, until the last few decades, even if the distribution of mineral resources has now taken its place in determining the strategic and demographic pattern.

Strategic factors tend to be neglected by Mr Shabad both in relation to the large scale picture and also to the details of local industry and occupations. This is inevitable in a work compiled from a running file of Soviet sources varying from textbooks to press cuttings and which avoids conjecture or interpretation. The author is not so shy of these matters as not to mention conflicting evidence on Far Eastern railways, for instance, but the material used accounts for automobiles and tractors but not aircraft or tanks appearing in an index which is rich in subject headings as well as geographical names. Such propriety is no doubt common form in political and economic geographies but the apparently exclusive reliance in other respects on Soviet material has other disadvantages. It leads in particular to extreme colourlessness without compensating precision or wealth of scientific details, since the line is drawn much more sharply in Soviet practice than in our own between technical and popular information and the former is generally regarded as a security matter. The Central Asian cities, deserts and oases, the Pamirs and the Caucasian mountains, are put in their place and without the flicker of a guidebook's star. Yet the fauna and flora are recorded by often misleading vernacular equivalents instead of their scientific names, while such a surprising fact (if true) as that the Chersky Range in Northern Siberia rising to over 3000 m. altitude shows no present glaciation is not given the only explanation — low precipitation, of which it would be interesting to hear more. Quite untendentiously the usual naïve padding of Soviet hand-outs crops up in the introduction and here and there in the regional survey. 'Mineral fertilizer is extensively used to improve deficient soils'; 'the potato crop (again in the U.S.S.R. as a whole) is channelled to the consumer as food and to the stock raiser as fodder' etc.; and 'the raising of livestock in the U.S.S.R. is closely related to the supply of fodder'. Mr Shabad commits the geographer's common error (which Max Müller compared to speaking of a brachycephalic dictionary) when he describes, as he frequently does, speakers of a particular language as of a corresponding 'racial stock'. The Chuval for example do speak a Turco-Tatar language but they probably changed to it from a Finno-Ugrian one whatever their 'racial stock' may have been. Moreover in describing the Chechen as a 'Japhetic Caucasian tribe' Mr Shabad is using an ethnic or linguistic classification which has fallen into disfavour even in the Soviet Union since the posthumous discrediting of Nikolai Marr.

These are minor imperfections in a most useful work whose scholarship in at least one particular, transliteration from Russian, is impeccable, rising above any standard of discrimination applied in this country. Fidelity to the Russian original is preferred to respect for non-Russian or pre-Russian nomenclature and this can lead to one or two inapposite place names such as Lake Tengiz, *tengiz* or *dengiz* being itself Turco-Tatar for 'Lake', while the translation of Mongol *Orda* in the Turco-Mongol Ulan-Orda as 'capital' instead of 'camp' loses the proper nomadic flavour of the original.

The maps are comprehensively abundant and without reaching the exquisite standard of some American sketch maps, for instance those drawn by Mr Noia for the University of California Press, they are admirably clear and they alone with the index make the book invaluable for reference. An appendix contains population statistics which carry official data further than any used by Mr Lorimer in his *Population of the U.S.S.R.*

MICHAL VYVYAN

BENJAMIN FARRINGTON: Francis Bacon, Philosopher of Industrial Science. Lawrence and Wishart, 12s. 6d. net.

The worst thing about this book is its title; Professor Farrington has a case to make, but to describe Bacon as the philosopher of industrial science is simply a

self-imposed caricature of his theme. His object is to paint Bacon not merely as a logician, the framer of a new concept of scientific thinking, but as a social and technological reformer. 'That Bacon should have recognized so soon the need for the application of science to production' he says, 'is one of his greatest titles to fame'. Consequently he finds much Baconian scholarship conventional and arid — because it treats Bacon as a philosopher. Yet he admits that the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* 'demonstrates perhaps more clearly than any other of Bacon's writings the fact that his vision was not limited to the material improvement of man's lot'. Whoever would suppose that it was?

The aspect of Bacon's thought that Professor Farrington emphasizes has not been totally ignored by historians. We have known for some time that those early members of the Royal Society who regarded the contribution natural philosophy could make to the progress of material civilization as being one of the many varied reasons for its study were re-echoing Bacon. Professor Farrington complains that the *Novum Organum* has been studied too much in isolation; but the reader of its first few axioms is hardly likely to be left in ignorance of 'The Empire of Man over Nature' which Bacon believed science should exploit. The author traces the development of this concept in Bacon's writings with skill, though I believe that further investigation in the sixteenth century would have shown that he did not invent it. Indeed the argument has been used by all who have sought to make learning 'practical', who have despised literary flourishes and metaphysics, including the great namesake, Roger.

There are many questions that Professor Farrington does not ask himself. Why was Bacon, who regarded himself as a critic of scientific method, such a bad scientist? Why, having repulsed Aristotle as a philosopher, did he lean so heavily on Aristotle's scientific doctrine? Why was he so completely outside the scientific movement of his time, so completely uncomprehending, not merely in his opposition to almost all the revolutionary ideas that do in fact lie at the foundations of modern science, but in his judgements on the men who framed them? Apparently these weaknesses are not to be defended, but neither are they explained. We should hardly gather that Bacon was a man in many ways more 'medieval' than 'modern' in his outlook, who was leading the scientific revolution from behind rather than in front. In part this seems to spring from a greater pre-occupation with *why* Bacon wrote what he did, than with the actual content of his thought, which perhaps the author thinks the logicians have over-distilled already. There is a school of historians and critics who maintain, apparently, that before one can judge a man's books, one must first discover his motives for writing them — what axe is he grinding, what side is he on in the socio-political conflict, does he face forwards or backwards? There is point in these questions, but they become dangerous when they lead an author to forget that original thought has independent value, no matter whose it was, or why it was thought, and that it is with the independent value that history or criticism is most concerned. In understanding the processes of the creative intellect motivation is of perhaps less assistance than anything else: a problem is not solved merely because it has been stated. It is perhaps a sign of chivalry rather than good sense to praise Bacon for erecting a sign-post (even for the best possible reasons) unless one first enquires into the direction in which it points, and whether the man who erected it had looked round to see if others had given directions towards the same destination. To say that Bacon had the intellectual capacity to apprehend the need for a reformation in philosophy is one thing; to say that he had the training, knowledge and mental power to effect it himself is quite another. The former problem had troubled the European mind for three hundred years already, and it is on the question of Bacon's success in solving it that his reputation must in the end depend.

However, this treatment has its merits. There is need for a study of the 'practical' view of learning which Bacon formulated rather than created, as there is also

need for a study of the influence of his encyclopaedic method outside physical science, where it was almost ludicrously unnecessary and ill-timed. One-sided as the book is, it is clearly written, and it does help to make Bacon's position in the history of science more comprehensible in non-epistemological language. It is still necessary for us to be reminded from time to time (as Bacon knew) that science is the acquisition of knowledge, as well as its interpretation.

A. R. HALL

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT: *Political Education*. *Bowes and Bowes*, 2s. 6d. net.

Professor Oakeshott is a conversationalist. Conversation is for him indeed the whole shape of intellectual intercourse, its Platonic form. Coolly and ironically flows the dialogue: who else but he could have given us such a phrase as this: 'Chaos, modified by whatever consistency is allowed to creep into caprice.' All his utterances seem to carry with them an aura of ineffability, as if they came from some melancholy region from which our weaknesses and stupidities can be seen and lamented over, but our virtues can avail us little.

This little pamphlet is his inaugural lecture as Professor of Political Science in the University of London, where he succeeds the late Harold Laski at the London School of Economics. Seldom in recent years can an inaugural lecture have been so successful. It is the first such lecture to be recorded on its delivery, and then broadcast to the world at large. It is already the subject of a lively controversy over the proper approach to the study of politics, which is an achievement by itself at a time when everyone is prepared to bellyache about politics, but almost never to think with any stringent intellectual excitement. Although its title is *Political Education*, in its form it is an attempt to persuade us to accept a highly individual category for considering political activity and in its purpose it is a plea for scepticism, scepticism so profound that it makes of the ordinary conception of political education an anachronism.

Professor Oakeshott's position is this. All human activity, he believes, when it is properly understood, conforms to the definition 'concrete and self-moved'. By this he means that if we want to understand what, on an occasion, people are doing, we must consider the *whole* of what is involved in their activity. We must take account of everything without which that activity would be impossible. If we say that such an activity as driving a car from Cambridge to London, for example, involves a knowledge of the way between the two cities and involves nothing more than that, we are understanding it incompletely. Knowing how to drive a car is an unavoidable and obvious implication of the activity under consideration, and it is only one of many others. Politics he regards as just such an activity as driving a car between two points and it is defined in his lecture as 'the manner of attending to the arrangements of a society'. Such an activity, or any activity, must be seen in conjunction with its necessary and sufficient conditions. And his question is: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of the activity of attending to the arrangements of a society?

Although the words 'concrete and self-moved' don't ordinarily suggest such a series of reflections to me, if that is what is intended by them I suppose they do raise the problem of defining what we should call politics in a cogent way. Is human activity divided up for us into given, discrete pieces which we can call politics, or making love, or cooking, or what you will? Further, is each such segmented piece, or autonomous region of activity logically the same sort of thing as all other pieces or regions? Do their names make sense in the same sort of context? Does the word politics stand for something so definite, for instance, that a book could be written about it of the same character as the book which can be written about cookery, and which appears several times in this essay? Questions like these could take us at once into the difficult and all important

problem of realism and nominalism, of Locke's 'real and nominal essences', of the bases of pragmatism, and of the validity of the assumptions of contemporary logicians.

And there is no reason whatsoever why these problems should not be raised about the subject matter of the studies called politics or sociology. We should, I think, welcome any attempt at the refinement of thinking in this field, and we should also welcome its being directed at these particular points. For there can be no doubt that we are in need of finer edges to our tools in social analysis. Political theory, indeed, presents a challenge to thinking quite as urgent and exacting as the challenge of mathematics and physics. Expressions such as 'political empiricism' and words like 'ideology' stand for problems of great difficulty and importance; we are right to expect that men of imaginative insight and logical penetration should make it their business to wrestle with them.

But the argument of the pamphlet before us does not seem to be concerned immediately with questions such as these. Rather it is given up to the refutation of modes of understanding politics which differ from the writer's and which are therefore unsatisfactory to him. The two most offensive of these modes are these; the one which assumes that politics can be a purely empirical activity, and that which supposes what are called 'premeditated ideologies' to be adequate guides to political activity.

What this little paper does do is to require us to decide how far we can go simply by the use of what might be called the aesthetic method. For it is in effect the setting out of a metaphor about politics. To begin with a 'concrete, self moved manner of activity' is, in its form at least, a metaphorical expression. It calls up an interesting image, it suggests conceptions which have considerable aesthetic attractiveness — it is in fact in the highest degree 'suggestive' in the technical sense which that adjective has acquired. But it has the disadvantage that it immediately suggests the imperative 'Show me one!' How can an activity be concrete? Why should we be expected to let go our grasp on common sense and concede that any activity can move itself, or be anything but the activity of some person or some persons?

Now it may be that such questions seem to be only a naivety to Professor Oakeshott. It may be his view that it could be demonstrated that all the expressions which ever are, or perhaps ever could be, used about such subjects as politics are necessarily of the logical nature of metaphor or simile. Perhaps, indeed, this is the value of his approach, that from amongst all possible metaphors he selects one which is no less a metaphor than all the others, but is the most illuminating of them, the more effective since it requires us to remember that all the others are metaphors too. This may be his own peculiar and necessarily a-logical solution for the dilemma of realism and nominalism in the form in which it faces us when we come to consider a category for social activity. It may be that it is here that we must seek for the justification for what is coming to be known as the rejection of rationalism in this field of inquiry.

If this is so, his readers might well have preferred to have such a demonstration made to them before they found themselves faced with an argument about political education which seems to assume that it has taken place. For no justification of the metaphorical appears in this pamphlet. No concession seems to be made to the common-sense view that metaphors are ordinarily a necessary evil, to be used only when no other method of expression is possible. Rather he seems to delight in the free flow and delightful aptness of his metaphorical expressions. We are told that 'a tradition of behaviour is a flow of sympathy', and that 'political education is learning to participate in a conversation': the phrase *la vérité reste dans les nuances* is quoted with an almost triumphant approval. Such phrases are undeniably attractive and suggestive, and their aesthetic justification is an apparent one. But in the absence of any demonstration that they are

MIND

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remorselessly forced on us by the logic of the situation itself, we may well find ourselves wondering if we do not here approach the precarious frontier which divides a protest against rationalism from obscurantism. Obscurantism is the harsh way of describing any attempt to substitute the emotive use of suggestive words for the strict discipline of logical inquiry.

The exhausting and intricate task of formulating theory which shall be of use in the analysis of the activity of men in society takes place in an arena where obscurantism is indeed a commonplace. So inexact are the concepts, so loose and vague the language, so various the meanings attached to the same words, that it is almost impossible to distinguish the valid proposition from the verbal pun, or to tell apart an illuminating exception from a meaningless paradox. Much of what passes for argument goes on over which words shall stand for what things. 'Ideology' is perhaps the word of the moment. Because it is the word of the moment with so many emotive overtones it is important for the writer of the moment to make it mean something important to him. Professor Oakeshott defines ideology when he first uses the term as 'abstract principles which have been independently premeditated'. This leaves us wondering what word we ought to use to stand for that process of the determination of political attitude by social surrounding which was the original and useful, if vague and elusive, connotation of the word ideology. For such a conception is in its very nature a matter of unconscious conditioning, the direct antithesis of conscious pre-meditation. And yet Professor Oakeshott is at pains to show on page 20 that such conscious pre-meditation, introduced arbitrarily by himself into the definition, is in fact an impossibility.

But it may not be of much significance to take exception to an individual use of words in such a verbal free for all. It is the use of paradox to resolve difficulties rather than exact procession from definition to resolution that seems to invite confusion. This little essay abounds in paradoxical argument. We are asked at the outset to accept the paradox that 'we should not seek a definition of politics in order to deduce from it the character of political knowledge and education'. In the process of analysing the so-called 'ideological style' of politics, we are brought up against the paradox that the men who believed in such a style themselves created political traditions. It is, apparently, the absorption of such political traditions (by the paradoxical method of 'exploring intimations') which shows the ideological style to have been a chimæra. The piece ends with that most famous of all paradoxes, 'the world is the best of all possible worlds and everything in it is a necessary evil'.

It is now a wearisome commonplace that the intellectual experience of our generation has been a somewhat discouraging one. In this matter of social theory we have seen the solid body of confident doctrine with which the century started to disintegrate and blow away. The step from formal philosophy to ethics and so on to politics is no longer confident, easy and natural: our logic is too complicated and rigorous, the expectations which have been aroused by the so-called success of the so-called scientific method have set up impossible standards. Meanwhile actual events in the realm known as political have become horrific rather than stimulating. It is easy to understand the attractiveness of the politics of metaphor and paradox in a situation such as this. It is even easier, perhaps, to underrate their usefulness in bringing us face to face again with fundamental issues. But neither this nor its aesthetic satisfactions must be allowed to conceal the possibility that it may be calculated to leave the situation just as it is, since its status is that of a justification for disbelief. It is one thing to say that common sense is itself no common sense phenomenon. It is quite another thing to say, as Professor Oakeshott seems to do, that common sense is itself completely bewildered by the complication of living in society.

PETER LASLETT

Nineteenth Century Opinion: An Anthology of extracts from the first fifty volumes of *The Nineteenth Century*, 1877-1901, compiled and edited by Michael Goodwin. *Penguin Books*, 2s. 6d. net.

This anthology should have been called 'Opinions from *The Nineteenth Century*'. It was the unique virtue of James Knowles's distinguished periodical during the first twenty-five years of its life (the period represented here) that it provided a forum for the diversity of informed opinion. The oecumenical label, 'Nineteenth Century Opinion' misrepresents its purpose and quality. At first sight, the bookstall-browser picks it up with the faint hope that he has found a latter-day Dicey — a study of the movement of ideas. Finding an anthology of short passages from the pens of about a hundred ladies and gentlemen ranging from Mrs Lynn Linton to Frederic Seebom, he is likely to put it down again with a strong suspicion that he is going to be stunned by an intellectual sandbag. This would be unfair to the book, and to *The Nineteenth Century*. There is plenty of sand here, but there are some fine mineral deposits (hardly diamonds) worth digging up. Perhaps Mr Goodwin, the present Editor of *The Twentieth Century*, put in the sand out of modesty, unwilling to suggest that *The Nineteenth Century* was always on top of its form.

As it is, the sand often sets the reader's teeth on edge, and may cause him to miss some of the very good things embedded in it. Why, for example, begin with a section on 'The Social Conscience' retailing the appalling lives of fur-pullers, shop-assistants and impoverished gentlewomen in the 1870s and 1880s? The evidence here presented of misery among the little people missed by the great drag-net of legislative intervention is immensely valuable to the social historian, but it is not going to serve as an attractive porch to the discussions that follow on the emancipation of women, science and religion, public taste, and govern-

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ment. The placing of this valuable though repellent section of the book may have been an act of faith and conscience, but it was bad policy for getting the book read. Thereafter, we pass from the tragic to the ridiculous. For the section on 'The Emancipation of Women' contains a fine display of the ineffable silliness of the English when they discuss sex differences. Here we find everyone from Colonel Blimp to Mrs Grundy. Out of the dust of battle come frenzied appeals to 'face the facts' — facts which no one ever produces; howls of anguish for the future of the Universities; screams of fury over the sufferings of the down-trodden race which produced Miss Nightingale, Mrs Fawcett, and Frances Countess of Warwick. It is good enough fun, but we long to hear the springy tread of Mrs Woolf or Mr Shaw on the nursery stairs.

It is somewhere around page 112 that we begin to understand why the Queen of Holland once called the Editor of *The Nineteenth Century* 'le quatrième pouvoir de l'état Britannique'. It is not true that Knowles had all the eminent men of the world except Bismarck and the Pope as his collaborators (as Frederic Harrison claimed). But at any rate he had Gladstone, Huxley, Ruskin, Wilde, Morris, Fitzjames Stephen, Dean Church, Frederic Harrison, and a host of others. Two criticisms may be made of Mr Goodwin's selection in these important fields of philosophy, religion, taste and government. In the first place, he might have given the reader some editorial assistance with the (now) lesser-known names. There are excellent passages from writers like W. H. Mallock and George C. Brodrick, but it is unlikely that most readers under the age of sixty will know who they were and with what authority they spoke. There are also many names of which ninety-nine out of a hundred readers will never have heard. George Potter, Sir Julius Vogel and the 4th Earl of Dunraven will probably sound like inventions of Beachcomber to the general. A few facts and dates would not only enliven but assure us. Moreover, some of these forgotten names cover highly intelligent, even prophetic, utterances — often greatly superior in merit to those of better-remembered contributors.

Which brings us to the second criticism. For some reason or other, the passages from the best-known people are singularly disappointing. Apart from Peter Kropotkin and T. H. Huxley, who never fall below their best form, the great names come out worst of all. Was it inevitable that Ruskin should be shown making a fool of himself over George Eliot, Oscar Wilde drearily (but fortunately briefly) championing thought above action, and William Morris merely complaining about the overcrowding of Westminster Abbey with second-rate monuments to second-rate persons? These men — not to speak of Gladstone, who comes off with less unexpected flat-footedness — were among the most incisive and vital minds of their age. Can it be that they really fell so far below their best when contributing to *The Nineteenth Century*?

Two things are revealed very clearly by this anthology: the superiority of even the most mediocre of nineteenth century periodical-writing to anything being produced outside the Universities of this country today. Not even at their lowest do these men and women sink to the banal 'wotcheering' of contemporary 'progressive' writing. Much of the best work in this anthology is concerned with predicting the very poverty of mind which under Socialism has become an accomplished fact. Secondly, the work shows the decline of respectable conservative thinking in the England of Lord Salisbury and Joseph Chamberlain. It is startling to find Sir Julius Vogel defending the British Empire on the very grounds from which Marxists would condemn it, while the best defence of individualism and liberty against Socialist Imperialism is put up by the anarchist Prince Kropotkin. There's glory for you, as Humpty Dumpty said. But what had happened to the tradition of Burke and Disraeli by the time of the Second Jubilee?

R. J. WHITE

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FRANCIS BERRY: *The Galloping Centaur*. *Methuen*, 12s. 6d. net.

RICHMOND P. BOND: *Queen Anne's American Kings*. *Oxford University Press*, 21s. net.

C. M. BOWRA: *Heroic Poetry*. *Macmillan*, 40s. net.

MARTIN BUBER: *Israel and Palestine. East and West Library*, 18s. net.

RICHARD CASE: *Emily Dickinson*. *Methuen*, 16s. net.

W. J. COX: *Play Better Golf*. *Frederick Muller*, 10s. 6d. net.

F. R. COWELL: *History Civilization and Culture*. *Black*, 21s. net.

JOHN F. DANBY: *Poets on Fortune's Hill*. *Faber*, 18s. net.

JAMES FORRESTAL: *The Forrestal Diaries*. *Cassell*, 25s. net.

LAWRENCE AND ELISABETH HANSON: *Marian Evans and George Eliot*. *Oxford University Press*, 25s. net.

JOHN HATCH: *The Dilemma of South Africa*. *Dobson*, 18s. net.

CHARLES BEECHER HOGAN: *Shakespeare in the Theatre, 1700-1800*. *Oxford University Press*, 42s. net.

HAROLD A. INNIS: *The Strategy of Culture*. *University of Toronto Press*, 6s. net.

A. H. M. JONES: *The Athens of Demosthenes*. *Cambridge University Press*, 2s. 6d. net.

BERTRAND DE JOUVENEL: *Power, the Natural History of its Growth*. *Batchworth*, 25s. net.

L. S. B. LEAKY (Ed.): *Proceedings of the Pan-African Congress on Prehistory 1947*. *Blackwell*, 35s. net.

WYNDHAM LEWIS: *The Writer and the Absolute*. *Methuen*, 21s. net.

NICHOLAS MANSERGH: *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*. *Oxford University Press*, 42s. net.

NATHANIEL MICKLEM: *The Tree of Life*. *Oxford University Press*, 7s. 6d. net.

BERNARD NEWMAN: *Tito's Yugoslavia*. *Robert Hale*, 18s. net.

ALLARDYCE NICOLL: *Shakespeare*. *Methuen*, 6s. 6d. net.

ROSEMOND TUVE: *A Reading of George Herbert*. *Faber*, 25s. net.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

R. KOEBNER: Professor of History, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

JOHN B. MORRALL: Lecturer in History, University College, Dublin.

HAROLD FISCH: Lecturer, Leeds University.

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